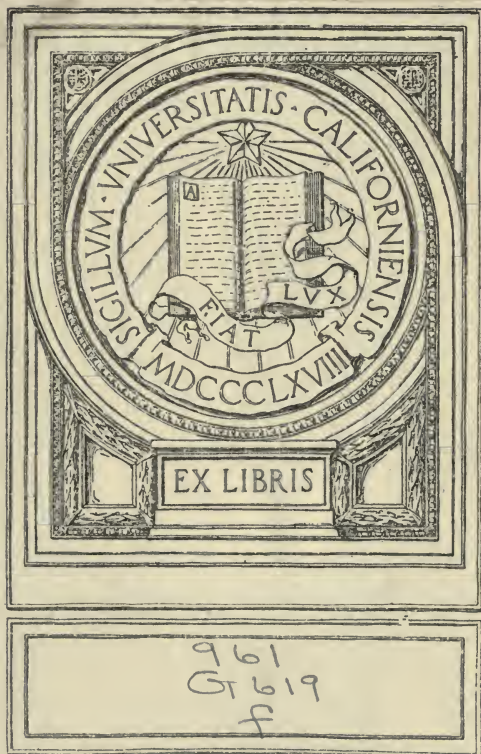


*FORWARD FROM
BABYLON*


LOUIS GOLDING



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FORWARD FROM BABYLON

BY
LOUIS GOLDING



1921
MOFFAT, YARD & COMPANY
NEW YORK

FOR MY FATHER

503217

A Glossary of some Yiddish words is given on p. 308.

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FORWARD FROM DOOMINGTON WALLS

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FORWARD FROM BABYLON

BOOK I

FORWARD FROM DOOMINGTON WALLS

CHAPTER I

RUSSIA—here was the first Babylon. Sitting on the metal stool, his second-hand velvet suit fraying against the heat of the oven, Philip's big eyes were round with horror of this immense, inscrutable place. Everything they said was portentous, not wholly real. Many of their words attained a meaning only after laborious thinking.

"*Kossacken*—big as trees!"

"Big spikes in front of the Gubernator's house! Babies stuck! Rachel, the parchment-maker's daughter, caught up on a white horse! Never heard of again!"

"Blood in the streets, thick!"

A fear and a helpless rage seized the faces there, always only half seen in the gloom of the kitchen. By day, beyond the bars which uselessly scowled against the small glass panes, the drab walls of the house next door kept away everything but a dirty and dubious light. By night, the flare of the coal-gas jet distorted his father, Reb Monash, and his own feet on the fender, and the sofa into things of blurred, awkward lines.

It must be confessed that Reb Monash Massel was not wholly unconscious of his power to produce this atmosphere where terrible and impalpable presences flowed from his lips in a shadowy rout. Sabres flashing ! Hilarious ponderous blasphemies tangled in the beards of *Kossacken* storming onward and away !

“ You’ve heard me talk of Mendel, the Red One ? No, not the shoemaker, the clerk ! It was when a clerk he was, in the woods ! They were cutting the Posne firs. They knew he was a Jew, the wood-cutters, and they put their heads together. Can one be a Jew without stabbing the *goyishke* eyes, eh ? He was working very late one night ; it was near the end of the month and he had all his accounts to make up. Well, he was bending over his papers very busy, and it was late, after midnight. There were owls hooting and two or three mad dogs in the woods crying now and again. It was very miserable, but he was bent over his figures. Above his head the air sang suddenly. He lifted his head and a knife he saw, quivering in the log wall beyond him, to his left. The window on his right was wide open because it was a sultry night. He got up quietly and closed the window, then took the knife out to give back to its owner next day. He was settling down to his work again when his eye was caught by something gleaming in the opposite wall. They were very badly built log cottages, these, pulled down as soon as the trees in that part of the forest were cleared. Badly built, big chinks between the logs. It was the gleam of a gun pointing at him through a chink. . . . ”

Somebody uttered a sharp cry. Philip on the fender-stool sat with the points of his elbows striking into his thighs, his chin pressed down into the palms of his hands. A burning coke exploded in the fire and a fragment jumped out on the mat. Mrs. Massel stooped to it

and swiftly, with unprotected hands, threw it back into the fire.

"It's already a long time ago," said Reb Monash. "I wasn't fifteen yet. I wasn't married. It's all over now, it's all over. Besides," he went on comfortably, at the risk of disturbing the atmosphere he had created by his subtle modulations of tone, his pauses, his notes of drawn tension, "besides, they'll all be frying in hell, the wood-cutters, one and all! What will you?"

A slight murmur of satisfaction went round among the women. The assurance coming from so authoritative a source as Reb Monash himself, no one could doubt that the wood-cutters had long ago met their deserts and were still adequately enduring them.

"*Nu tatte*, what about Mendel, the Red One?" This from Philip in an anxious quaver.

Reb Monash looked round and down on Philip, a significant droop in his eyelids, his lips tightening a little.

"*Schweig*," he said. "Silence! is thy *tatte* running away?"

"Hush!" Mrs. Massel echoed, very quietly, from her corner of the sofa.

Reb Monash could not resist the temptation of taking out one of his Silver Virginia cigarettes, deliberately setting it in his mouthpiece, lighting it, and drawing smoke two or three times contemplatively.

Somebody's foot tapped in a corner. He resumed. "Yah, a gun pointing at him through a chink. What was there to do, I ask you? If they fired—well, they fired, and he was dead. If they didn't fire, he was alive. And if a man's alive, a man must live. Not so? So he took his quill in his hand again . . . and he heard a little noise in the wall behind him. He looked round. Another gun. There, held by unseen hands in the night.

Another gun. Pointing at him. Two guns pointing at him. He turned round to his table again. A Jew's not a Jew for nothing. He said a few blessings. Thou hearest, Feivel ? " turning to Philip.

Philip swallowed a lump in his throat fearfully. He was afraid to answer. It was perhaps one of those rhetorical questions to which an answer was somehow, mysteriously, an offence. He thrust his head deeper into his hands and blinked.

" He said a few blessings," Reb Monash repeated, to press the moral home upon his listeners. " Well, what will you ? He was a good clerk, very neat. And while the minutes in his clock were ticking as slowly as the years during the Time of Bondage, his figures he brought over from column to column. When came the first sign of morning so that the lamp shone less strongly on the two guns in the walls there, pointed at his heart," these last words with slow emphasis and repeated, " pointed at his heart—he dipped his head and hands into his bowl of water, took out his *tallus* and his *tephilim* ; and when he was passing the strap round his arm, he heard very faintly the guns withdrawn through the chinks in the walls. But he could hear no feet creeping away. Besides, he was *davenning* ; how could he listen to anything else ? It's only God you must think about when you're *davenning*, no ?

" He finished when it was already day in his hut. His beard—it was a small beard, only a young man's beard—was grey, like the snow in Angel Street. He did his accounts so well, did Mendel, the Red One—they always called him the Red One, even after that night, and strangers wondered why Red One—so well, that the merchant he worked for increased his wages by a rouble a month soon after. Oh, a Russia it was ! What say you ? "

By this time Mrs. Levine, from Number Seven, was soaked in tears, her face, her blouse, and even the flour on her apron was streaky and damp. She had come in half-way through, but any anecdote, sad or merry, or merely a parable to illustrate a point of law, invariably reduced her to tears.

"*Nu, nu!*" said Reb Monash, "over a year in Jerusalem!" which was a signal that no further ramification was to be expected from that anecdote, and moreover, that it might not be unwise for Mrs. Massel to drop her knitting and prepare for him a tumblerful of tea and lemon, with a lump of sugar—not too much lemon, for these were hard times; not like Russia, where people hung round your neck to beg the privilege from you of staying with them as a guest for two months, three months, as long as you liked. Well, that was Russia, but what could you expect from England? Pah! *Yidishkeit* going to the dogs! Young men he'd seen with his own eyes shamelessly boarding those new-fangled electric tramcars on a *Shabbos*! Which involved a double offence; not only riding but also carrying money in their pockets to pay for this dissipation—money on *Shabbos*!

So it seemed, Philip was fitfully made aware, that there were aspects of this Russian Babylon which compared very favourably with the situation in England, or, more precisely, in the drab Northern city of Doomington, where Philip first saw the light, seven years before; or, perhaps, to be accurate, in Angel Street, where the wire factory at one end and the grocer's shop at the other were the limits of his confident experience. Beyond Moishele's shop ("grocer's" shop only for convenience, seeing that his stock-in-trade extended from sewing-machines to fish and beetroot), Doomington Road extended its sonorous length, where, sole oases

in this desert of terror, Philip recognized the Bridgeway Elementary School and the Polish Synagogue, the *Polisher Shool*.

It was not wholly that the young scions of Judæa in Russia were so far from committing definite sins against God and Man that their days were a positive round of gratuitous holiness. Much as Philip tried dutifully to rejoice with his father over this sanctity of young Russian Jewry, even when Reb Monash significantly expatiated on the talents of young gentlemen only seven years old who steered their own vessels through the dark seas of Kaballah—it was not this piety which set Philip brooding.

The landscape which his elders painted, unconsciously and incidentally, as a background to their memories, filled his mind with inchoate sequences of pictures. To the Jewish mind there is only one landscape which purely for its own sake arrests the mind and the heart. Each detail of Jordan or Lebanon is impressed centuries too deep for its deletion under snow or dissolution under fire. Plateau of Spain, the turbid flow of Volga, the squalid nightmare of Doomington Road, are matters of indifference to the Judaic protagonists while the great drama develops along its austere and shoddy ways towards some *dénouement* far beyond the invisible hills. To Reb Monash the Orthodox Greek Church he had known at home and from which his eyes turned bitterly away, whence the black-hearted pappas came forth and, on seeing Reb Monash, grimaced and bit his lips, had imperceptibly become the Baptist Missionary Chapel at the corner of Travers Row, whence the Rev. Wilberforce Wilkinson emerged from time to time, bestowing on every Reb Monash or Philip Massel who came that way a smile beatific with missionary invitation.

But it was a matter of much concern to Philip that

the Dniester which flowed beyond the pear-orchards (pear-orchards! he tried wistfully to recreate them spreading their splendid snows beyond the kitchen wall-paper) was clean as—clean as the water in the scullery tap. Which seemed mythological. Philip's acquaintance with rivers was limited to the River Mitchen that flowed on the further side of the wire factory and parallel with Doomington Road. The river stank—literally and abundantly. When it rose after the spring floods of two years ago, the cellars of Angel Street were a wash of noisome and greasy waters.

"It happened in the centre of a forest . . ." said one. "Trees—the sun never got through their leaves in summer . . ." said another. "Yes, she had her own vines and fig trees. . . ." ". . . Corn, barley, all rotten in the rains . . ." ". . . and after that, to finish them, they had five haystacks burned to the ground ;" "the orchard by the river, near the Woman's Pool . . ." they said to each other.

It was little more than words to Philip. It seemed illogical that there should be a river, which, being a river, did not stink. Fruit could hardly be dissociated from the baskets and trays at Moishele's shop. True, there were unconvincing pictures of fruit trees in the classroom at school, but they lent only a feeble corroboration.

And then inevitably the talk came round from orchards and clean rivers to the old Babylonian horrors.

"It happened in winter. I stood in the trunk of a rotten tree till nightfall. All day I could hear the women screaming and the horses of the *Kossacken* storming in from the country. They set fire to Miriam's house, and when she came to the window holding her hands out to the crowd . . . they threw a broken wine bottle in her face. . . ."

When Reb Monash fell into his best anecdotic form, Philip sometimes, only a year or two ago, had been afraid to venture beyond the front door, in fear of *Kossacken* galloping in with drawn sabres from Dooming-ton Road. Indubitably the night was compact with their menace. Only gradually he shook off these alarms. England, he realized, the very filth of the Mitchen river impressing it upon him, and the grime of these grassless, clangorous streets, England was not Russia—a knowledge won only after thick agony and his brow soaked with midnight terror. Russia—the first Babylon—the dread, the enmity, faded into the murky Doomington skies.

One scene remained with him to consummate this nightmare. Reb Monash told the story frequently. If he had played a part whereat women lowered their respectful eyes with a fleeting gesture of disapproval or impatience, his piety none the less was confirmed, if it needed confirmation, in the eyes of the Lord Himself.

It was many years ago now, years before Philip was born. Reb Monash at last was emigrating from Russia to the Western world. His family and half a dozen other families had been packed into the uncovered emigrants' cart which was to take them to the railway terminus many leagues away, where they would entrain for Germany and Hamburg. It was a matter of no interest to the authorities that at most a dozen people could breathe comfortably and stretch their limbs in the vehicle they provided. Family after family was bundled in, every half-foot of extra space was crammed with bedding and the few household goods which, the more cumbrous they were, they found the more indispensable. Why, indeed, Reb Monash was emigrating he had not precisely satisfied himself. Though fear of a *pogrom*

hovered ever on the horizon, a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, but liable, any wind of prejudice blowing, to streak the sky with more sanguine hues than sunset, this had been beyond memory so much a normal feature of existence that it could not have been the determining factor. If the traditional *wanderlust* animated him, he was too much in demand as an orator in the synagogues hundreds of miles round Terkass to lack means to gratify his instinct. It cannot have been the sentiment that young Jewry in England and America (where he was intending to end his provisional pilgrimage) had so far fallen from grace that it needed the example of his physical presence before it could resume the narrow road; it can hardly have been that—for such ungodliness as prevailed in England and America needed to be seen before it could be imagined.

"But there we were," said Reb Monash, "Chayah," this being Mrs. Massel, "with little Rochke, peace be upon her, at her breast, and myself and Dorah and little Channah. Oh, what a wind was blowing! Knives! Packed like dead men in coffins we were! Then the driver cracked his whip and we were away. It was a desolate country, only we could see the long road in front and overhead the cold clouds and the fir trees running along the road by our side, patiently, like wolves! We could only hear the wind and the bells of the horses and their hoofs, click-click, click-click, hour after hour. But though the wind blew so cold in our faces, there was no room to breathe, no room. To stretch out the chest, an impossible thing. And then there was a station at the roadside where we stopped and—imagine it! they put another five, six people in the cart. Think of it! We started to grumble and some of the women and girls began to cry. What do you expect? They were half-dead for sleep. But how

could they sleep, crushed like that, standing, with no room to bend, let alone lie down, and the wind driving through their chattering teeth. There was an official there. 'Curse you!' shouted he, when he heard us lift our voices, 'Curse you!'

"May he be cursed to his father's father!" every one in the kitchen muttered bitterly.

"'Curse you for a lousy lot—you beggars, you rats! Ugh!' He spat into the cart, in amongst us. *Nu*, we did what possible was to let the new people come in. Can you picture for yourselves—Oh! you *can't*—what it was like? Rochke, peace be upon her, was at the breast. We could hear the poor baby crying for food, eh, Chayah?"

But Mrs. Massel could never bear the telling of this tale. She would be in the scullery peeling potatoes. Not washing up. It was indiscreet to make a noise when Reb Monash was talking. If Philip dropped a book, Reb Monash had to pause a full minute until he recovered the evenness of his flow.

"Poor little Rochke, peace be upon her, crying for food! And so crushed were we that there wasn't even room to feed the child, though everybody understood and tried to make room. Now, perhaps you'll realize what it was like. As the child became more and more hungry she became too weak even to cry. It was getting dark and I started my night prayers. Then I heard Chayah shout to me, 'Monash! Monash!' It was not the first time she'd cried 'Monash!' to me that day. What could I do? What help was there? I just went on *davvenning*. Ah, the poor child, the poor child, God wanted thee!"

His eyes softened. There was a huskiness in his throat. The women in the kitchen lifted their aprons to their eyes. If there were any men there they cleared

their throats staunchly. Philip sat on the fender stool, his heart bursting with pity for his mother. "Poor mother! my own poor mother!" he felt like whispering into her ear and throwing his arms round her neck and assuring her that he was alive and *he* would love her and die for her at the last. But he remembered that he was not encouraged to display vehemently his passion for his mother. Very gently he slipped from the stool, turned round into the scullery and took a knife to help her peel the potatoes. At all events, he would not allow her to work so cruelly hard. Why, her fingers were dry and thin! No! he would never let her work like this. Never mind, when he grew up . . .

"Poor child, poor child!" Reb Monash continued, his voice a trifle unsteady. "How can I tell you? She was suffocating there. No room for her little lungs to open and draw breath! 'Monash, the child, the child!' Chayah was saying. What could I do? How could I understand? Besides, I was *davvenning*—how could I interrupt? And her little face was growing grey. What? Do you understand? There was no room for her heart to beat . . . so her heart stopped beating!"

Again there was a pause. The suffocation which had gripped the child in that monstrous cart years ago seemed to occupy the kitchen in Angel Street. It was not only the shut window; the beneficence of the architects of Angel Street had declared that kitchen-windows should be close-sealed as a wall. It was not the shut doors; the doors were always shut because a "draught" aggravated Reb Monash's cough and rendered him speechless for minutes. That suffocation from the Russian road had descended upon Angel Street. Some one opened his collar and craned his neck for air.

"But, of course, Chayah would not believe that anything had happened to the child. I could only see Rochke very indistinctly because we'd been separated by the crowd. 'It's only a fit! Shake her, shake her, if thou canst!' I said. 'Or perhaps a sickness of the stomach!' said Chayah. 'It will be well with the child when we stop and get down! She'll have some air and food, and she'll be all right, no? Oh yes, she will, she will! Sleep then, sleep then, babynu, all in mammy's arms!' she sang.

"God alone knows what the place was where we stopped to change horses. And Rochke, peace be upon her? Well, what need to talk? She's happier than you or me. Oh, but what an ornament to the race she would have been! Such eyes, the little one, holy, like an old woman's! But wait, the story's not finished yet. Can it be believed? The officials there, they wanted us to continue the journey with the dead child! The smirched of soul, the godless ones! Wanted us to go on with the dead child! And when even they saw it was against God and Man, they wanted to bury her there and then, in unconsecrated ground! Oi! Oi! has it been heard of since Moses? But always put your trust in the Above One and all will be well with you. Know that! Think of us, in the wilderness, with a dead baby, and no holy ground to bury her and not a friend anywhere. The cart had gone on to the next stage, with Dorah and Channah. Think of us!

"It was then the Above One came to our help. A Jewish merchant was on the road with a load of dried fruit. He stopped, God be thanked, at the station, and we told him how things lay with us. And would you believe it? Not a penny he would take—not much was there to give—but he took the baby away and gave her holy burial in his own town! Be his years long in the

land ! May his seed multiply to the fourth and fifth generation ! And so all is well with Rochke, peace be upon her ! ”

Reb Monash obviously drew much consolation for the whole episode from the fact that the Above One had shown him this signal favour, and the last offices had been performed unimpeachably over Rochke's body.

But perhaps Philip was too young to be comforted by the thoughts of the propriety with which the incident had closed. He could only see very clearly the figures of his mother, blank-eyed, her hands empty, standing alone in Babylon, in that bleak Russian night.

CHAPTER II

PHILIP had not yet recovered from the dull dismay with which he had found himself installed as a scholar in the Infants' Class of the Bridgeway Elementary School. He had attained the age of five. Within quite recent memory he had been breeched. He still remembered the pocket in his skirt which was crammed with "stuffs"—the main merchandise of his companions, snippets of prints, calicoes, alpacas and linen rags picked up below the maternal needles and generally on the doorsteps of Angel Street.

Reb Monash was by no means hostile to the idea that Philip should acquire a Gentile education, on the broad understanding that it should not outshadow Philip's accomplishment in Hebrew lore. It went without saying that labour on the Saturday should be anathema under any concatenation of the links of Fate. Moreover, the law of the land, in the person of the "School Board," had been eyeing him significantly.

"It's time Philip should begin school!" said Reb Monash shatteringly one evening. Philip lay dozing on the horse-hair sofa. His heart shook before the joint assault of a great joy and a great fear. "School"—that unfathomable place of red brick and towering windows, where the "lads" went, the swaggering young men who jumped from pavement to pavement of Angel Street in five jumps; where one was brought into

direct visual contact with "pleaseteacher," a thing beyond all imagination lovely and terrible.

"So Channah, thou wilt not go to work to-morrow morning. He's an old man, Philip, and he must make his start in life."

"All right, *tatte!*" Channah murmured. She thought ruefully of the fourpence or eightpence less it would mean in her week's total as a buttonhole hand. But she was devoted to Philip and his wise, elderly ways, and the thought of setting his feet upon the paths of that learning whence her own feet had been rudely torn on the morning of Philip's birth was worth the sacrifice of many fourpences.

Philip's face shone soapily next morning. His black hair lay stretched in rigidly parallel formations on both sides of his impeccable parting. Channah had shined his button-boots with so much rubbing and spitting into congealed blacking that his boots seemed to focus all the light in the kitchen. His mother had adorned his blouse with a great bow of vermilion sateen.

"Is pleaseteachers like policemen?" Philip asked, as Channah led him by a hand clammy with apprehension along the Doomington Road to the Bridgeway Elementary School.

"Oh no! Pleaseteachers are much more lovely!" was the reply. "Policemen only lock little boys up, but pleaseteachers give 'em toffee—and flowers!"

"And flowers?" echoed Philip incredulously.

When they arrived at the entrance to the school, a sudden nausea overwhelmed Philip.

"I'se not going to school!" he said suddenly and firmly.

"Feivele, what do you mean?"

"I'se not going!"

"What's the matter with you? Why aren't you going?"

"Dat's why!"

But Channah had not come unprepared for such an emergency. Mrs. Massel had anticipated it with a stick-jaw of Moishele's best. She held it towards the child and made provocative labial noises.

"Aren't you going now?"

"No!" he said a little more doubtfully.

She had another weapon in the armoury.

"*Tatte* will give you such a *pitch-patch*!" she said threateningly—*pitch-patch* being a form of castigation among all nations as constant in method as it is variable in name.

In the surge of new fears, Reb Monash had been temporarily obscured. Philip's mind travelled back swiftly to the knees of Reb Monash where at so sinless an age he had already lain transversely more than once. He contemplated the possibility of *pitch-patch* for some moments.

"Gib me de stickjaw, den!" he said.

"You can't eat it now!"

"One suck!" he wheedled.

They passed duly through the vestibule into the great "infants' hall." At its geometrical centre the principal pleaseteacher sat, pavilioned in terrors. A few words of high import passed between Miss Featherstone and Channah. Before Philip's eyes the walls soared endlessly into perpendicular space. There was no ceiling. He made the hideous discovery that there was no floor to the room. His shining boots hung suspended in space. Strange antiphonies propounded and expounded the cosmic mysteries. He was lost. He was rolling headlong among the winds, like a piece of cotton-fluff lifted high above the roofs of Angel Street.

What was this? The pleaseteacher was looking at him; her mouth was opening; there were big cracks on each side of her nose. Yes, she was smiling into him. He resumed his ponderable qualities. He was a little boy dismally sick in the infants' hall of the Bridgeway Elementary School. He preferred to be a piece of cotton-fluff. It was a more impersonal doom.

"What's your name, little boy?"

He wondered whether it was an impertinence to reply. It was funny and dry at the back of his throat. He stared fixedly at the crack on the left side of her nose.

"What's your name, little boy?" A certain acidulation had thinned her voice.

"My name Feivele an' I live at ten Angel Street an' I'm five years old an' my farver's Rebbie Massel!" he said, the words trembling out in a bewildered spate.

"Will you ask your brother to speak a little more slowly and distinctly, Miss Massel? Thank you. *Now* what's your name, little boy?"

"Philip Massel, pleaseteacher!"

"Now, Philip Massel. I'm your head mistress. You must call *me* Miss Featherstone. Miss Briggs!" she called, "Miss Briggs! Will you please put Philip Massel into your class?" Then turning to Philip, "You will kindly call Miss Briggs 'teacher.' You understand?"

"Yes, pleaseteacher!"

"Stupid! But he'll soon know better," she assured Channah.

"Yes, Miss Featherstone!" Channah corroborated. Philip's hand feverishly held his sister's all this while.

"You'd better just see him to his place," said Miss Featherstone to Channah, as Miss Briggs led the way to her class.

"Sit here, Philip," said Miss Briggs, "next to Hyman Marks!"

"Don't go 'way, don't go 'way!" Philip huskily implored Channah. Hundreds of scornful eyes were stripping him bare of his blouse, his shined boots, his bow of vermilion sateen, till they all lay at his feet in a miserable heap and he shivered there in the cold, naked, despised. "Don't go 'way!" he moaned.

Channah looked despairingly towards Miss Briggs.

Miss Briggs seized her chalk significantly. It was time the new-comer had settled down.

"I'll tell you what," said Channah, "I'll go to Moishele's and buy you a ha'pny tiger nuts and a box of crayons. And I'll come back straight away."

"Promise!" he demanded in anguish.

"*Emmes!*" she said, invoking the Hebrew name of Truth.

"*Emmes* what?" He knew that Truth unsupported by an invocation to the Lord was a weak buttress.

"*Emmes adoshem!*" she said, her heart sinking at the perjury. But, she consoled herself, it was not as if she had sworn by the undiluted form of the oath, "*Emmes adonoi!*" from the violation of which solemnity there is no redemption.

Philip saw her disappear through the doors. A black cloud of loneliness enveloped him until he could hardly breathe. The terrifying sing-song of these young celebrants at their fathomless ceremony had begun again.

*Twice one are two,
One and one are two!
Twice two are four,
Two and two are four!*

Fantastic hieroglyphs danced across the blackboard at the dictate of Miss Briggs' chalk. The heavy minutes

ticked and ticked in a reiteration of monochrome and despair.

*Twice one are two,
One and one are two !*

What teeth she had, Miss Briggs ! Not like his mother's ! A little yellow his mother's were, but small and neat, as he observed whenever she smiled one of her tired and sweet smiles. What was the specific purpose of Miss Briggs' teeth ? Why should those two at the top in front be so large and pointed ? He had heard old Mo who sold newspapers tell tales about cannibles. Wass Miss Briggs a cannible ? Oh the long, long Channahless minutes ! When would she come ? What ? Some one was whispering behind him.

" Say, kid ! "

Philip was afraid to turn round. What would Miss Briggs do if he turned round ? And she had two such horrid teeth, at the top, in front !

" Say, kid ! Got anyfing ? "

Philip turned his head round fearfully. A villainously scowling face was bent over from the bench behind towards his own.

" Aven't yer got nuffing ? "

Philip looked helplessly into the forbidding face.

" I tell yer, kid ! " the voice menaced, " if yer don't gib me anyfing, I'll spifflicate yer ! "

The process of spifflication sounded as terrible as it certainly was vague. Philip put his hand into his trouser-pocket where the lump of stickjaw lay warmly spreading its seductive bounties over the lining. To part with a whole lump of stickjaw from which the one due he had extracted was a single suck ! But, on the other hand, spifflication ! And moreover, soon, oh surely very, very soon, Channah would come back with the tiger nuts, not to mention the box of crayons.

He drew the lump of sticky languor from his pocket. A grubby fist from behind closed round it.

*Twice two are four,
Two and two are four !*

Faithless Channah ! How could the mere passing of time be such a labour ? He subsided into a daze of stupefaction ; only the hope of Channah's appearance buzzed and buzzed like a fly on the ear-drum. A great tear rolled slowly down his face. Another followed and another. They dropped into the bow of vermilion sateen. Suppose his mother should die in his absence ? Or there might be a big, big fire ! And just suppose. . . .

A great clangour of bells ! Miss Featherstone on her dais shut a book with a loud snap. Miss Briggs definitively placed her chalk on her desk. A pleaseteacher from another class walked with dignity over to the piano at the far end of the hall. She lifted the lid and played a slow march. The top class filed out from the desks, advanced in single order to a red line which, starting a few feet from Miss Featherstone's dais, led to the door ; the class marched along the red line and passed with decorum from the hall. When Philip walked the red line in his turn he was wondering whether he ought to be placing each foot centrally upon the line. Dizzily he staggered along. When at last he rushed out into the road, wild with the relief from servitude, Mrs. Massel was waiting for him outside the school entrance, and when she lifted him from his feet, he howled with fearful delight.

His heart was full of resentment against Channah for her ignoble desertion. "Channah de Pannah, de big fat fing !" he jeered, when he saw her at dinner. Only the surface of his wound was healed when she bestowed

upon him not only the tiger nuts and the box of crayons but a gratuitous tin trumpet gay with scarlet wools.

He refused vehemently to return to school that afternoon. But Reb Monash, entering the kitchen from the sitting-room where his *chayder*, his Hebrew school, was installed, speedily convinced him that the morning's bitter destiny must again be pursued.

For days his tiny faculties were flattened beneath the weight of his bewilderment. When, one morning, he went with the others into the playground for the interval, he crept inconspicuously on the skirts of the shrieking masses to the furthest corner in the wall, where he crouched, huddled, wondering what it was like to be grown up. When a lady came into the playground and vigorously rang a bell, he felt that no bell had any meaning to him. He was apart, unwanted. When he saw the children lining up in their classes and passing into the school with their teachers at their head, he turned towards them a dull abstracted eye. But when the appalling quiet of the playground impressed itself upon him, and he heard the choruses droning through the windows, "Twice One are Two," he realized with a sickening pang of alarm that he too was a cog in that machine, that he ought to have been minutes and minutes ago on the inner side of those walls.

His face was hot with shame as he dragged his feet through the door, and along the red line which burned down the hall like a trail of fire. When he slunk into his place like a cat with a stolen steak into a cellar, he found the eyes of Miss Briggs turned towards him so round with stony horror that he feared they must drop from their sockets. Hyman Marks next door gazed virtuously at him and turned away with a sniff.

Something of this early stupefaction remained with him, even though he had passed from the infants' hall

to the upstairs department. "Pleaseteacher" had long been attenuated into "teacher," and Miss Green, who was the genius president over Standard Two, had entertained for him more than a teacherly regard ever since Philip had raised his hand in the middle of a lesson and inquired from her, "Please, Miss Green, can pupils marry teachers?" They frequently maintained long conversations when school was over, until Philip suddenly would bethink himself of the duties his racial tongue demanded and which awaited him in *chayder* under the unremitting vigilance of Reb Monash; whereon, with a troubled "Please, good afternoon, teacher!" he would scamper off. Miss Green liked the sonority with which he delivered the recitations she taught in class. He had a premature sense of tragedy.

*On Linden when the sun was low,
All darkly lay the untrodden snow—*

he delivered with the long modulations of a funeral dirge. He seemed to have discovered a new delight in the mere utterance of rhythmic lines. "On Linden when the sun was low," he chanted on his way home from school, bringing his right foot down heavily upon the iambic stresses of the line. There was a Saturday morning when Reb Monash tested his knowledge of the Bible portion to be read in the synagogue that day with "Say then, Feivele, what is the chapter in *shool* to-day?"

Philip was abstracted. His mind was recreating his latest conversation with Miss Green.

"On Linden when the sun was low!" he replied. Reb Monash stared at him. "Proselytized one!" he exclaimed. "What means this?" He led Philip to a copy of the Pentateuch and summarily refreshed his mind.

They were great friends, Miss Green and Philip,

a fact which did not leave Philip's behaviour uninfluenced. The class was filing through the open door, (in the upstairs department the classes had single rooms instead of a common hall). He had not noticed that an unfamiliar teacher was standing at the door in Miss Green's place, and just before entering he turned round to exchange a few words with his successor in the procession.

"You bad boy!" exclaimed the voice of the strange lady. "Do not sit down in your place! You will stand in the corner till I ask for you!"

Philip's ears were rimmed with hot shame. The procession ended. "Come here!" said the lady. "Hold your hand out! Now!" Five, ten, twenty times, she brought a ruler down on his knuckles. It was not the pain which mattered. It was the disgrace! He, Miss Green's young friend—or, as his class-mates with characteristic envy and vulgarity called it, her "sucker-up!" Acute as his humiliation was, he kept strict count of the ruler's descent upon his knuckles. Twenty-four! Wouldn't Miss Green have something to say about it!

When the class filed into the room next day, Miss Green was looking down upon Philip with so affectionate a regard that the shame and anger pent within him since yesterday burst their bounds and he broke into tears.

Horror upon horror! Miss Green, touched to the heart by these sudden tears, bent down from her Olympian five-foot-four and kissed him loudly on the forehead! It was too much to bear! A platonic display of mutual respect was an excellent arrangement. But this descent into the murky ether of physical contact injured his sense of fitness. The sudden drought of his tears, the bright red spot in the centre of each

cheek, instructed Miss Green that she had erred. "These inscrutable little Jew-boys!" she mused, and turned to Alfred and the cakes.

Next day she asked him to stay a moment with her after school. They both realized the impropriety of any reference to yesterday's incident. There followed a little small talk, then—

"Tell me, Philip," she said quietly, "tell me which you'd rather be, Jew or Christian?"

The wheels of the whole world for one instant ceased their revolutions. Here in truth was the end of an epoch and the beginning of another. Here was an issue which nothing had ever before presented to his mind, and an issue stated so simply. "Tell me, Philip, which would you rather be, Jew or Christian?" He caught his breath as he envisioned the state of affairs when such things as being Jew or Christian depended upon one's own volition. For one instant cool as snow and loud with the volume of plunging waters a something beyond even this came from far off and looked mournfully and intensely into his eyes: he beheld a state of things where nothing bound him with chains, where dispassionately he looked at Jew and Christian, and walked away, onward, up the slopes of a hill, where words like these had lost all meaning.

He staggered on the locker where Miss Green had placed him. His forehead was damp with a slight dew of sweat. The blackboard caught his eyes.

26
34

104
78

884

Yes, yes, that was more intelligent. He scratched his head and looked down at his feet. Really when you come to think of it, Christians did eat repulsive things. There was a Christian boy in the playground one afternoon eating a *brawn* sandwich—despicable food, spotted and pale pink like the white cat at home after the kettle of boiling water had fallen on its fur. True ! it seemed that Christian boys occasionally went for their holidays and saw cows and trees and things—a distinct feather in the Christian hat. But on the other hand, Mr. Barkle was a Christian, and only Christians could kill rabbits like Mr. Barkle. The slaughtering of animals was a very peculiar and limited privilege among his own folk—a rite performed, as Reb Monash had made clear to the *chayder*, swiftly, painlessly and professionally. Mr. Barkle, on the other hand, had brought a rabbit into Standard Two for “object lesson” and murdered it, slowly, publicly. Mr. Barkle himself was not unlike a rabbit. He was very fat and his grey waistcoat resembled the rabbit’s belly. But his eyes sparkled somewhat unpleasantly—very different from the rabbit’s big, brown frightened eyes. And Mr. Barkle had pressed the rabbit’s neck between his hands, till the eyes became bigger and bigger, and the legs moved convulsively, and a long low whistle came out mournfully from the rabbit’s throat, and the legs twitched only faintly and then hung quite limp.

After Mr. Barkle had cut up the animal to describe its parts, a little Christian boy had said :

“Please, Mister Barkle, can I take the rabbit ’ome ? Farver luvs rabbits !”

No ! Philip determined. *No !* he would never be a Christian !

Yet Miss Green was a Christian. It would be impolite to be too decided about it.

"Please, Miss Green," he said, looking up, "I'd rarer stay wot I was born!"

"There's a wise boy!" said Miss Green, with the faintest touch of chagrin. And the conversation pursued less transcendental roads.

CHAPTER III

AT no time did Philip find the society of his coevals congenial ; the society at least of the young males of his age ; which was an element in his composition not, I venture, to be crudely dismissed as one form or another of priggishness.

Whatever the defects were of Philip's education, and these were not inconsiderable, he was never warned to have no truck with Barney of next door because his father was a presser and rigidly banished collars from his wardrobe, excepting on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, on which occasion a waterproof collar did annual service with much *éclat* ; nor were fogs of dubiety sedulously created around Mr. and Mrs. Lavinsky, whose premarital relations were, it was rumoured, not free from stain.

Yet inherently Philip held himself aloof from all the " lads " in Angel Street. He felt, not consciously and certainly not in defined words, that everything coarse and cruel in the architecture of Angel Street had taken hold of their spirit. There was as much of the frankly and repulsively animal in them as in the sharp-ribbed cats who chattered obscenely on the walls. He felt at times when he saw the boys slithering along the roofs that fragments of the very roofs, steeped in grime and dirty rain as they were, had detached themselves and become animate.

He turned with relief to the latest " poetry " he had

been taught ; in the reverberant recessions of rhythm the boys were rolled over and sucked down like pebbles in an ebbing tide. The fustian of " Horatius " gave him unmeasured delight, and soaked in the yellow flood of Tiber he would forget the malodorous imminence of Mitchen.

But in the girls of Angel Street he satisfied his need for human companionship. They did not bandy the filth of gesture and word which were the traffic of the boys and which turned him sick, made him faintly but dismally aware of yawning abysses of uncleanness hidden from his feet.

So he would sit with the girls at their doorsteps while the boys shrieked in the entries. The girls were a willing audience for his declamations of verse ; they accepted Kaspar's reiteration of " But it was a famous victory " with sympathy and evident pleasure. When they realized the full implications of the question,

*Oh, is it weed, or fish, or floating hair,
A tress o' golden hair,
O' drowned maiden's hair ?*

they took out their handkerchiefs and wept.

Philip was sitting among the girls cutting out from the advertisement pages of magazines pictures of ladies with artificially perfected busts. The pictures thus obtained were inserted among the leaves of books and the custom of the possessors of pins was solicited. Three pricks among the pages of the books were allowed, with whatsoever bounty fell to the adventure.

Philip had never quite decided which was the happier state—the being endowed with pictures of many well-busted ladies, or the possession of many pins. The latter at least held the prospect of a service he might render

to his mother, to whom a stock of pins should, he presumed, be an inestimable boon. But opulence in pins meant a dearth in busted ladies—a barren state of affairs only to be remedied by a fresh outlay of capital.

A “gang” came by whooping. “Gang” was a popular word in the vocabulary of Angel Street. It was sinister with warnings of Red Indians crawling on their bellies from the pampas beyond Doomington Road. It evoked images of Red Signs found on the necks of the murdered daughters of millionaires.

“Yah! look at Philip Massel!” a voice jeered from the “gang.” Philip shivered. He disliked the “gang,” he had no point of contact with it.

“Stick-to-my-muvver-an-don’t-touch-me!” the voice continued. The girls were silent, for chivalry was not a predominant trait in the psychology of the “gang.” Jessie still bore a black eye inflicted by Barney in unequal war. It was Barney took up the cry:

“Philip Massel, Queen-of-the-Girls!”

This was a slogan which appealed to his comrades. “Philip Massel, Queen-of-the-Girls!” they reiterated shrilly. Philip’s face was pale. His hand trembled as he cut the pictures. The bust of the next lady he delimited sadly belied the merits claimed by the advertisement.

“Oo—oo! ’Oo kissed Jessie in the back entry?” Barney howled.

“Philip Massel, Queen-of-the-Girls!” the rest sang in choric delight. Oh, the black cavernous lie! Was Jehovah silent? Philip’s eyes blazed. He flung his scissors down with a crash. The further side of Angel Street rose and sank as he rushed towards Barney. The rules of the ring had not yet been studied in Angel Street. Murderously he buffeted his fists against Barney’s abdomen. Barney turned green and subsided.

The rest of the "gang" jumped upon Philip and were comfortably pummelling him when Reb Monash appeared on the scene. Mrs. Levine had lost no time in informing him that a brawl was in progress. Reb Monash had no doubt it involved those of his scholars who were already scandalously late for *chayder*.

The "gang" wilted before him. At his feet lay Philip, gasping and bleeding.

"Feivele at the bottom of it!" he thundered. "Oh, a credit thou art to thy race! An eight-year old, and this is the sum of thy knowledge! Come then, I will instruct thee!" and he led Philip sternly home by a familiar grasp of the brachial muscle between finger and thumb. Jessie picked up the scissors ruminatively and turned the pages of the *Strand Magazine*.

The idea shortly after occurred to Philip that some compromise with his sex ought to be possible. It occurred simultaneously with the appearance in his library of a new type of American hero. He was now able to read without difficulty the "bloods" which described with impartial gusto sandbaggings in the Bowery and the slaughter of travellers conducted by Poncho-clad desperadoes in the Argentine. Lurid as the "gang" was in behaviour, their literature was still extremely tepid. Intellectually, they had not outstepped Lady Kathleen's tender limits as laid down in her *Books for the Bairns*, whereas Philip's heart had for months hovered and exulted with the hearts of fully-fledged errand boys, twelve and fourteen years old.

But a new hero had crossed the Atlantic. He was in soul much more turbulent than the heroes of the conservative school. His morals, purely, be it understood, in order to achieve a virtuous end, were even more elastic. The terror of his name was even more astounding. But

all his villainous qualities were kept strictly below the surface, though, of course, his assistants were as coarse-grained and blasphemous as tradition demanded. His manners were so exquisite that hotel-keepers did not presume to ask for the payment of their bills. When he slipped from his chambers to undertake a midnight escapade, he would insert into one pocket his revolver, into another a silver-mounted bottle of hair-oil. Whilst his minions were grappling with the objects of his displeasure and bullet shots ripped across the shack, he would lift the wick of the lamp in order to manicure his nails. His speech was so full of gracious evasions that—that, in short, he completely captured Philip's heart.

Here was a mode of making artistic capital out of those very qualities of the young men in Angel Street which so revolted him, whilst at the same time he would himself accentuate those features of aloof refinement for which they had dubbed him "bouncer," a word particularly repugnant to him, accentuate them actually amid deference and applause.

How, then, was a reversal of the Angel Street relationships to be effected? Philip hardly knew. His first discovery was the gratifying fact that on a certain non-physical plane the "gang" regarded him with a measure of positive awe. Not only was he the son of his father, but he had the Kabbalistic faculty of uttering rhymes, a faculty which influenced them precisely as a barbarian village might be influenced by a medicine-man's incantations. His uprising against Barney had not been barren of result, though the fierce splendour of it had been mitigated somewhat by the parental sequel.

But most of the battle was won when, by a stroke of fortune, Philip, for whom a new hat was long overdue,

was supplied with a sample of the head-gear associated with captaincy from time immemorial. His new hat was dowered with a shiny peak and a ribbon splendid with the legend "H.M.S. IMMACULATE," and when pressed slantwise over Philip's left eye gave him an air of authority not generally associated with his small face. A certain calm persuasive eloquence, assisted by a number of "alleys," both "blood" and "conker," vastly advanced his cause. He read, finally, certain convincing passages from the career of the Dandy Dave by which not only was Philip Massel's claim to be his European representative rendered incontrovertible, but it was proved also that any actual immersion of his own person in the filth of affairs was as unbecoming to Philip's new dignity as to the dignity of Dandy Dave.

The character Philip now assumed was undoubtedly a composite affair. Dandy Dave was predominant, but it was not immune from the vocabulary and behaviour of pirates, explorers, trappers and other species of emancipated men. The trapper element did not persist, as shall be rendered credible.

"Do you see that skunk?" Captain Philip exclaimed to Lieutenant Barney one day.

"Aye, aye, sir!" replied Lieutenant Barney, "Aye, aye, sir!" being, in fact, Lieutenant Barney's only and final achievement in the diction of romance.

The "skunk" was a notorious piebald cat even at that moment slinking with a torso of fried fish along the yard wall of an empty house where the "gang" was foregathered.

"'E must be captured! We shall sell 'is 'ide to the next ship wot calls at yonder port!"

An exciting chase, which extended over two days, followed. On the evening of the second day the corpse

of the piebald cat was laid at Captain Philip's feet.

"Wot now, Captain?" said Lieutenant Barney, whose wavering loyalties had been steadied only an hour ago by the gift of an india-rubber sucker. Philip's heart fluttered a little unquietly. In the mere abstract conception of chase there had been much of the poetical. In the presence of the dead cat the fogs of illusion thinned. Shame tugged at his heart-strings. But the faultless figure of Dandy Dave stood before him. With little knowledge of the implication of his words, "Flay 'im!" he said harshly. "The merchants call this morn!"

Lieutenant Barney inserted a broken blade below the fringe of the cat's eye. He tugged. Philip looked down. The hideous mess which ensued spattered Philip's brain like a pat of filth. He ran quickly from the yard and was violently sick for many minutes. . . . The trapper aspect of Captain Philip's authority did not again assert itself.

Behind the Bridgeway Elementary School extended a huge and desolate brick-croft. Here the "gang" frequently undertook expeditions to the Himalayas and the two Poles. Volcanoes were discovered and duly charted. Wide lakes of clayey yellow water were navigated. It was a point of honour with the "gang" that the lakes must be definitely crossed from border to border, not merely circumvented. But while the "gang" miserably splashed along and drew their clogged boots to the further side, Captain Philip serenely walked the whole way round and from his dry vantage encouraged his men to safety. It would never do for the Doomington counterpart of Dandy Dave to smirch his own limbs alongside of the vulgar herd.

The last episode in the captaincy of Philip was the

Liberation of Princess Lena, the immediate inspiration of which was the gallant rescue by Dandy Dave of the daughter of the President of the American Republic from a cellar below the very basement of the White House.

Lena Myer lived in Angel Street and kept irregular hours. The days of her flirtations had already begun. When she returned one evening it was arranged that the "gang" was to seize her, gag her, and carry her away to the stable of the lemonade works adjacent to the wire factory—whither Lieutenant Barney had discovered a secret entrance. Here for the space of an hour she was to be bound to a support. The clattering of horses was to be heard in the courtyard and Captain Philip, sweeping in magnificently, was to cut her bonds, lay her captors in the dust and deliver her with a flourish to her distracted parents.

Of course, Lena herself was not to be informed of the somewhat negative part reserved for her. She had already attained her "stuck-up" days, but her beauty and her father's wealth, (he was a barber), evidently cast her for the situation.

All fell out as arranged. As she entered the darkest patch of Angel Street a black mass fell on her, choked her with rags, and bore her kicking furiously to the stable, where she was fastened to a wooden support. Many desolate minutes passed, during which her moans struck so heavy a chill into the hearts of the desperadoes that at last they removed the rags from her mouth. Immediately such a foul stream of imprecation fell from her virginal lips, that the bloodthirsty gang withdrew trembling towards the spider-webbed walls. She threatened them venomously with the vengeance of her admirers. Some one made a tentative advance in her direction. She uttered a piercing scream and he recoiled

with knocking knees. The "gang" had experienced fights with "gangs" from other streets; the "gang" even had compassed the discomfiture of a policeman. But a situation like this, where the incalculable feminine threw all their generalizations into rout, left them shorn of philosophy.

"Jem Cohen 'll 'ave your eyes out, yer rotten lot 'er lice!" said the maiden delicately.

A clatter in the yard beyond the stable, cunningly caused by the play of two slates on the cobbles, produced sudden silence. Captain Philip! A tremendous wave of dislike for Captain Philip swept over his supporters! Nobody but a "bouncer" like that Philip Massel could have involved them in so unnatural a situation. By crikey! *They'd* show him, by jeminy, wouldn't they just!

Philip rushed into the stable's darkness.

Rigid with hate, Princess Lena lay taut against her support. With a fine curve Philip drew the captainly knife. The braces-and-rope fetters fell from the lady's limbs. With the hiss of an escaping valve, Lena threw herself upon the astounded hero. Two great scratches ripped redly down Philip's cheeks.

"Take that an' that an' that' an that!" she howled as she thumped him, bit him, scratched him, tore his hair. Then her nerves gave way, and she sank to the ground, all of a heap, sobbing.

Beyond a scowling, laughing, shaking of fists, the "gang" had remained passive hitherto, but the moment Lena subsided, with convulsive unanimity they fell upon their captain. When at length the sated gang emerged from the stable, there was no superficial point of resemblance between Dandy Dave and the quivering youth moaning lugubriously in the darkness.

Philip had not yet found a key to the Happy Life. His experiment among the young gentlemen of Angel Street had doubtless been foredoomed to failure. He was not of them. He had been a "bouncer" and would, in their eyes, remain a "bouncer" unto the world's end. They realized cunningly how he winced when they shouted filthy words after him. Their experience with Lena Myer had widened their vocabulary, and they filled the air with enthusiastic impurity as he passed by. He was approaching his ninth birthday, but still the little girls of Angel Street gave him his one illusion of society.

School, too, filled him with leaden ennui. Miss Green's class was only a memory of his later infancy. Miss Tibbet, his present teacher, was a hopeless automaton. She wore masculine boots and impenetrable tortoiseshell spectacles. When she opened her lips, sound issued; when she closed her lips, sound did not issue. Her personality was capable of no further differentiation. Nothing happened. A waking sleep buzzed in her classroom like a bluebottle.

For his years he was early in Miss Tibbet's class. There was something about him which much endeared Philip to the young ladies of ten and eleven who sat in the same benches. The emotion at first was one of somewhat elderly amusement and compassion. But when Jane Freedman declared herself in love with him, it became a universal discovery that Philip lay wedged between the split sections of every heart. They brought offerings to him—cigarette cards, jujubes and raw carrots, (Philip had an unholy appetite for raw carrots). One day Jane Freedman waylaid him with a large lump of pine-apple rock.

"Kiss me, and it is yours!" she said. It was a very large and inviting piece of pine-apple rock; it had only

been slightly sucked, not more than a taste. He kissed her.

The other girls promptly waylaid him with larger pieces of pine-apple rock. The whole thing really was very unpleasant. On the other hand pine-apple rock had its compensation. Yet Philip developed a great distaste for humanity. Boys, at one extreme, were more unclean than cats, (cats being the predominant fauna of Angel Street, they were a useful starting point for all philosophy). Girls, at the other, were more sentimental than fish. Pine-apple rock began speedily to pall upon him.

School was wearying beyond words. Not a chance gleam of gold filtered through the pall of cloud. Miss Tibbet's mouth opened ; then it closed. It would have been an incident, even if you could have seen her eyelids blink beyond her spectacles. She taught poetry as she taught vulgar fractions. A mad impulse began to seize upon Philip. He must separate his own lips further, wider, more hilariously than ever Miss Tibbet was capable. Then to deliver himself of one prolonged shout—no more. One prolonged shout which would cleave a path through the clouds of monotony where-through the dizzy horses of adventure might come tumbling from the spacious blue winds beyond. Not a shout of pain or of desperation. A shout merely from the whole capacity of his lungs, a human shout, a challenge of the body in ennui.

His lips opened trembling. Miss Tibbet's spectacles swept blankly towards his face. He bent down over his paper. The impulse waxed within him and became a passion. He began to say to himself that the whole future of his life depended upon his courage. If he did not open his lips and yell he would be one thing. If he did open his lips and yell, he would be another thing, and

a bigger, freer thing. One day he stretched his jaws to make the effort. The back of his mouth was crammed with sand. He lifted his hand as if to hide a yawn.

A mystic conviction took possession of him. If he had any value, that shout would be achieved. But its agent would be something greater than himself. Prepared or unprepared for it, the shout would come, if he was worthy.

It was a very hot afternoon. Miss Tibbet croaked at the blackboard like a machine. A desultory dog was barking somewhere with insensate yelps. The geranium before the closed windows drooped in the heat. Flies were droning aimlessly.

A huge shout swept suddenly into every corner of the room, slapped Miss Tibbet's face like the palm of a hand. There was an intense silence. All eyes turned to Philip's face, which was flushed furiously red, unhappy, exultant.

"Philip Massel, stand up!" He shuffled to his feet.

"Was it you who made that noise?"

"Yes, Miss Tibbet!"

"Why did you make that noise?"

"I don't know!"

"Did somebody stick a pin into you?"

"No!"

"Did anybody stick a pin into Philip Massel?"

No reply.

Here was something entirely beyond Miss Tibbet's experience.

"Will the monitors keep order, please, while I take this boy to the head master!"

Philip knew that sooner or later he would burst into tears. But a great load was off his mind. He was free, he was free! For one moment of dizzy elation a pang of

that emotion struck him which long ago made him tremble on a locker in Miss Green's room before the fateful question—"Tell me, Philip, which would you rather be, Jew or Christian?" The sheer poignancy passed, but something of his elation remained, even in the cadaverous sanctum of the head master.

Mr. Tomlinson sat ominous in his chair as he listened to Miss Tibbet's recital.

"Why did you behave in that disgraceful way, Philip Massel?"

"I—I—don't know, sir!"

"What do you mean, you don't know?"

"I don't know, sir!"

"Are you sure it wasn't a pin?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Are you in pain?"

"No, sir!"

"Am I to understand that . . ." But Philip's shoulders were shaking. Big tears rolled down his face. He hid his face in a dirty, frayed handkerchief. He heard Mr. Tomlinson and Miss Tibbet whispering overhead.

"The heat . . ." said one.

"Yes, I should think . . . the heat. . . ."

"You may go home, Philip Massel!" said Mr. Tomlinson. "Tell your mother to put you to bed at once. Say I told her she must keep you quiet. Don't come to school to-morrow if your head is aching. . . . And never let it happen again, young man! Understand that!"

Philip withdrew. A grin mingled maliciously with his tears.

A day or two later he was standing contemplatively against the playground wall during the interval, when

he observed Harry Sewelson approaching. Sewelson, though he was about a year older, was in Philip's class. He lived in a draper's shop some minutes along Doomington Road. They had had no commerce hitherto. Philip made a new friend with extreme difficulty, and though he realized that there was a quality in Sewelson, a keenness in his grey eyes, which distinguished him from the rest, there was a garlic vulgarity about him, a strongly-flavoured bluster, which, he had learned from Reb Monash, was inseparable from Roumanian Jewry.

"I say!" declared Sewelson, "I bet you I know what was the matter on Tuesday! I bet I know why you gave that shout!"

"*Bet* you don't!" Philip replied. He was vaguely proud of the complex of motives which had induced him to behave in so baffling a manner.

"Nobody pricked you!" Sewelson asserted.

"Right for once!" Philip agreed.

"And you weren't ill! I bet I know!"

Philip looked up curiously.

"*You just wanted to!*" Sewelson whispered in a somewhat melodramatic manner. "You felt you just had to. You couldn't get away. You were sick and tired!"

Philip's brown eyes looked up shyly, with a certain pleasure, with a certain distrust, into the grey eyes before him.

"You're right!" said Philip. "It wasn't my fault!"

"I say," Sewelson said, after a pause. "I say . . ." Then he paused again.

"Yes?" asked Philip.

"I say, what about being pals?"

Philip blushed slightly. "Let's!" he said.

They walked down the playground with linked arms.

"Oh, yes!" accepted Philip innocently. "I *do* think Miss Tibbet is a narky bitch!"

"Carried *nem-con*!" exclaimed Sewelson, proud of his elegant introduction of a foreign tongue.

CHAPTER IV

THE vicissitudes of school and Angel Street represented only the secular side of Philip's existence. The Jewish, the clerical side, claimed his servitude as soon as he pushed open the door of the house. The whole day, of course, was punctuated with greater or lesser ceremonies ; but a considerable portion of it, at least of that part not taken up by school, was spent in his father's *chayder*. Beyond *chayder*, to gather together and confirm the saintliness ardently desired and pursued for him by his father, lay the synagogue in Doomington Road, the *Polisher Shool*.

The room in which the *chayder* was housed was distinctly dismal, despite the fountain of spiritual light playing perpetually there, the fountain whereof Reb Monash himself was the head. It lay between the "parlour," a chilly room upholstered in yellow plush, which was on the right as you passed into the "lobby," and the kitchen in the recesses of the house, to enter which you descended two invisible steps. Beyond the window of the *chayder* and beyond the yard, hung a grim, blank-windowed hat-and-cap factory.

Low forms, where the two dozen scholars were disposed, ran round the four walls of the room. Before a table facing the window Reb Monash sat, in the additional shadow cast by the large oblong of cardboard which occupied a fourth of the window-space so as to hide the

damage caused by a malicious Gentile stone. More for minatory gesture than for punishment, a bone-handled walking-stick lay to his hand, along the table. Facing the door a large cupboard stood invariably open. Here on the lowest shelf were the Prayer Books, from the first page of which the youngest scholars learned their Hebrew capitals. Here also were the penny exercise books where the scholars proficient in the cursive script wrote letters of a totally imaginary politeness to their parents. "My dear and most esteemed Father and Mother," they ran, "I am full of concern for your health. Reb Monash joins me in respectful greeting. The High Festivals are approaching, God be thanked, and I trust the Above One will bless our ways with milk and honey and will much increase our progeny, even as the sands on the shore. Believe I am your to-death-devoted son."

Upon one wall hung a chart where an adventurous red line traced the forty years' wandering of the Jewish race between the House of Bondage and the Promised Land. A portrait of Dr. Theodor Herzl, every feature cleverly pricked out in Hebrew letters, hung opposite. There were enlargements from photographs of Mr. and Mrs. Massel, and portraits of Heine and Disraeli, which had been hung not without compunction, although each had made so generous a death-bed recantation of his errors.

The payment to Reb Monash for a week's tuition ranged between one shilling and eighteenpence. He sometimes accepted ninepence, but on the condition that other parents should not be informed and the market be thus demoralized. He even accepted no payment at all, in cases of extreme indigence, where it meant that a scion of Israel would otherwise run riot in pagan ignorance. The attendances of his pupils were as

follows:—In the week-days, a few frantic minutes between morning and afternoon school for the recital of *minchah*, the midday prayer, and more importantly, several long hours in the evening; on the Saturday, once, after dinner.

During the evening session, while the maturer boys were biting their pens over their letters home, and the boys less mature were transcribing for page after page a sample line in Reb Monash's own script, *rebbie* himself dealt with the infants, five, four, three years old. Patiently, gently, the meat skewer he used as a pointer moved from capital to capital. (A safe way to win temporary harbourage in *rebbie's* good graces was to provide him with a new pointer.)

"*Aleph!*" said Reb Monash. "*Aleph!*" piped the little voice.

"*Baze!*" "*Baze!*" "*Gimmel, daled!*" "*Gimmel, daled!*"

With the young he had enormous patience. When at last they knew all the letters in their consecutive order, his pointer would dart bewilderingly from letter to letter.

"*Lange mem, tsadik, coff. . . .*"

Ignorance, up to a certain age, Reb Monash could condone. It was inattention against which he maintained a fiery crusade.

"What, thou canst not distinguish between *baze* and *shloss mem*? Playest thou then alleys already? Thou art a lump-Gentile, a *shtik-goy!*" After the youngsters had been thus instructed, a snap of his Prayer Book was the signal for a deathly calm. All the exercise books were closed and put away upon their shelf. Everybody sat down upon the benches round the wall and each face assumed a look of virtue bordering upon imbecility. Reb Monash then produced a thin notebook where in

three columns down each page he had written a large number of Hebrew words. These words had, excepting rarely, no connection with each other. One leaped abruptly from "pepper" to "son-in-law" and thence to "chair," "snake," "pomegranate" and "yesterday."

Starting with any boy indiscriminately he read out word after word, receiving an English or Yiddish equivalent. Here again, to introduce a complexity, he suddenly interrupted the written order of the words, or, indeed, himself gave the profane equivalent of the vocabulary and demanded the "Holy Speech" in return. With as little warning he transferred his attention to another of his scholars, and woe upon him if the black crime of inattention had sent his wits scattering, woe if his lips could not repeat the word just translated! A silence intense as the silence of the antechamber where the High Priest three times demands from Radames his defence, occupied the breathless *chayder* during the process of "Hebrew."

Yet for all his sallies and alarms the tragedy of Reb Monash was no more apparent than in the heart-broken monotone in which he uttered his list of inconsequent words. All the ghettos of Russia had known the silver of his voice. If there had been sorrows of Israel none had told them more poignantly; if Zion still were to raise tall towers, none so joyfully had prophesied her new splendours. Still in many synagogues beyond the *Polisher Shool* his oratory was in demand. But the glow of his old dreams? Was it because no single reality had called him to concrete endeavours, that no single dream had found fulfilment?

But all this lay deep down, deeper than himself dared to pursue.

"*Pilpelim?*" "Pepper!"

"*Lo mit a vov ?*" "To him !"

"Philip, where holds one ?"

"... er ... er ..."

"What ! thou knowest not ?"

"Yes, *tatte*, yes ... *odom*, a man !"

Reb Monash's lips set tight. Philip's back curved under his father's fist. He pressed his head down upon his neck. He knew that the nearer he attained to immobility, the sooner would his punishment be over.

Reb Monash sat down again.

"*Roshoh ?*" he asked significantly.

"Evil one !"

"*Boruch ?*" to point the contrast.

"Blessed !" the voice translated.

And so till "Hebrew" was at an end. Then followed translation from the week's portion of the Pentateuch ; and perhaps if one or two scholars of such holy state remained under his care, an excursion into the Talmud.

The combination of Miss Tibbet and *chayder* left Philip limp with fatigue and dejection. Life under Miss Tibbet was clockwork, barren of adventure and hope. *Chayder* was a cycle that each year returned to the same spot through a round of indignities and petty tyrannies. All its nightly incidents were the same as last week's and last year's and seemed destined to reduplication world without end. Walls seemed to rise frowning before him wherever he looked. It was hard to breathe. Were these days the pattern of all the days he should ever know, till he died at last and half-hearted funeral eulogies were uttered over his coffin ?

Yet now and again there were incidents which slightly relieved the tedium of existence. As for instance when

the notorious Jakey arrived in *chayder* about an hour late one stifling summer evening. Jakey was in truth a desperate character. His stockings lay invariably over his boots, and the boots themselves knew no other fastening than string. Among the layers of dirt on his face his right eye or his left emerged livid in purple and salmon hues. On numerous occasions he had "wagged" school in order to play pitch and toss with coins, derived who knew whence? in the company of stalwarts fifteen years old, three years his senior.

It was in fact during the solemn stillness of "Hebrew" that he arrived. Upon his appearance the hush was intensified into something acute as shrill sound or pain. Slowly, with tight-browed condemnation, Reb Monash turned his head to the truant. "So thou art come!" he said. "Enter! we are incomplete without thee!" With withering courtesy he motioned him to the end of a bench. Nonchalantly moving the tip of his tongue from one cheek to the other Jakey sat down.

"Nu, Jakele, what hast thou for thyself to say?" he asked, still couchant, as it were, upon his chair. Jakey for several seconds longer kept his tongue in his left cheek. He lifted his brows in interested contemplation.

"I had the stomach-ache!" he suggested, clasping his hands against his liver as a piece of convincing by-play.

"*Ligner!*" thundered Reb Monash, "Thou art sound as a Hottentot!"

Jakey withdrew one hand from his stomach, and lifted a thumb to his mouth.

"My muvver's dying!" he said after further meditation.

Reb Monash quivered with wrath.

"Such a year upon thee! Long live they mother, but thou, thou art a proselytized one!"

He advanced to make Jakey more immediately aware of the jeopardy into which his soul had fallen. Jakey looked up shiftily, his eyes watchful. Reb Monash's fist came down upon empty air. Swift as a lizard Jakey darted across to the table. He stood there, Reb Monash's bone-handled stick uplifted. A murmur of horror went round the *chayder*. Reb Monash with a shout of anger advanced raging. And then it was that his own stick, the symbol of more absolute authority than the Shah's, was brought down upon his own shoulder. There was a silence. Then immediately a tremendous hubbub filled the room. Reb Monash sank into his chair. A few of the youngest lads lifted up their voices and wept. A boy in a corner was giggling nervously.

"Where is he? Where is he?" asked Reb Monash weakly. An enormity had been perpetrated unknown in the annals of *chayders*. And in *his*, Reb Monash's, where discipline and holiness were equal stars.

"'E's ran away! I seen 'im!" the cry rose.

Reb Monash grimly took up once more his book of Hebrew words. The long monotone began again.

"*Ishoh?*" "A woman!"

"*Sachin?*" "A knife!"

The door was flung open. A storm of flying apron-strings filled the threshold, and a cloud of loose hair. It was the mother of Jakey.

"Reb Monash, what is for such a thing?" she demanded indignantly. "One might think a policeman, not a *rebbe*. My poor Jakele, gentle as a dove, a credit in Israel! What for a new thing is this?"

Reb Monash lifted his hands deprecatingly. "What say you, Mrs. Gerber? An hour later he comes. . . ."

She gave him no time to continue. "And then to lay about him with a walking-stick! A Tartar, not a Jew! Never a word of complaint from God or man

about my poor orphan and . . . to come to *chayder* . . . and a pogrom! *Oi, a shkandal!* A walking-stick like a tree! A moujik, God should so help me, not a *rebbie!* Poor Jakele, crying his heart out like a dove! I'll take him away from a so crooked *chayder!*"

"But that concerns me little!" broke in Reb Monash. "For each one that goes, come four each time!" (This confident mathematic invariably puzzled Philip. He knew how necessary to the Massel family was an increased income. Why should not Reb Monash dismiss his whole *chayder* and then automatically increase his clientèle fourfold?)

"Like a tree a walking-stick!" continued Mrs. Gerber. She flounced through the door. "Such a year! Such a black year shall seize you!" she spat. The door closed with a loud bang. It was impossible to sit down under it. Not only to have been assaulted, but to be accused of being the assailant was too much to bear. Reb Monash took his skull-cap, his *yamelke*, from his head, placed it on the mantelshelf, and assumed his silk hat.

"Learn over your passages!" he rapped out as he followed furiously to the house of Jakey.

There was subdued whispering at first.

"Wot a lark!" said some one. "Oo—aye! Wot a lark!" some one else repeated. Then every one laughed. Philip was hilarious. It really was too funny—Jakey the dove!

"I've got the stomach-ache, *rebbie!*"

"No you've not, you mean your *muvver's* dying!"

Some one lifted the walking-stick. Barney did a *pas seul* in the corner. The gaiety of the situation intoxicated everybody. Philip was swept off his feet by the general merriment. He reached up for his father's

skull-cap, put it on and looked round solemnly. Barney imitated Mrs. Gerber with great distinction.

“ A moujik, not a *rebbie* ! ”

At this moment the door opened. Reb Monash's face looked round glowering below his silk hat. Quick as thought Philip covered the borrowed skull-cap, knowing there was no time to replace it, with his own cap. He felt the unfortunate load pressing guiltily against his head.

Reb Monash took off the silk hat and looked round for the *yamelke*.

“ Where's my *yamelke* ? ” he demanded fiercely.

—“ Dunno ! ” a murmur rose.

“ Did I not place it on the mantelshelf ? ”

“ Didn' see yer ! ”

“ Dost thou know ? ”

“ No, *rebbie* ! ”

“ Dost thou, Philip ? ”

“ No, *tatte* ! ”

“ Dost thou, Barney ? ”

“ No, *rebbie* ! ”

“ Empty ye out all your pockets ! ”

The *yamelke* was nowhere to be found. It was a very hot evening and it produced on Philip an unholy delight to see his father sitting there in the close heat, with bright red carpet slippers, thin black trousers, a thin alpaca coat—and to crown all, the stately and stuffy tall hat, malevolent and quite definitely absurd.

It was towards the end of the evening that Philip lifted his cap to scratch his head over some knotty point in the *chumish*, the Pentateuch, they were translating. He had wholly forgotten the abstracted *yamelke*, so, whilst his own cap fell with a soft slur on the table before him, the *yamelke* sat revealed like a toad under a lifted stone.

Reb Monash looked up. It was too late to hide the *yamelke*. Reb Monash's eyes glinted unpleasantly. *Chayder* drew to an immediate end.

The drizzle falling beyond the *chayder* window next day was like a curtain of liquid soot. The interview between Reb Monash and Philip on the conclusion of last evening's episode had made them both, for different, for opposite, reasons, very tired. Philip, though the hard form where he sat left him at no time unconscious of his wounds, was only a little more listless than his father. His mind was too numbed even to appreciate the exquisite irony of his letter to his "esteemed and beloved parents." When the ritual of "Hebrew" recommenced, it was only with an effort that he suspended the mechanical scrawling of his pen. The dirge of question and reply proceeded mournfully, broken only by the occasional "where holds one?" like the surface of a pond on a dull day when the fish seem to rise rather to assert their rights than to satisfy their hunger. Oh, to get away from it all, mused Philip dimly. To where there are trees and grass like Longton Park, but freer, larger. To go there alone and to come back to mother, perhaps with an offering of cowslips, whatever they were. There would be a bird there who would sing. Not like a canary. He couldn't bear the singing of canaries. They reminded him of a pale girl whom he saw sometimes at a window of the hat-and-cap factory. She sang sometimes, like a canary, ever so sweetly, but a captive. He had once seen a canary cage hanging on an outside wall. A great rain-storm had burst, but the people on the doorstep had gone in, forgetting all about the bird. He had knocked at their door and told them, and though the man had sworn at him, he took the bird in, a sickly sodden mass,

greyish-yellow. That bird had not sung again. It uttered only a little broken cheep each morning when the sun came. Now out there . . . Oh, what was all this useless droning, droning about . . . “*Pilpelim?*” “Pepper!” . . . out there, when the rain came, there would be thick branches to shelter that singing bird. He would walk alone, clean, free. “Alone I walked, I walked alone.” There was music in that! “Alone I walked, I walked alone.” Yes of course! the sense was quite different, but there was something about it identical with his “On Lín den whén the sùn was lów.” “Alóne I wálked, I wálked alóne,” he stressed. “I sát upón a móssy stóne,” he followed swiftly. What fun! That was like real poetry. He repeated the words, trembling with delight.

*Alone I walked, I walked alone.
I sat upon a mossy stone.*

What about that bird? We must introduce that bird! “I heard a bird singing up in the sky.” No, that wouldn’t do! Something was wrong! Gosh! it was very easy! Just leave out that “singing,” thus: “I heard a bird up in the sky.” But we can’t end there! “I heard a bird up in the sky,” and . . . and . . . “He sang so sweet and so did I!” His thighs trembled. His heart stormed. He had beaten down the walls of *chayder*; he was away beyond somewhere; he was elected into the fellowship of poetry; what did Miss Tibbet matter for ever and ever? Again, again . . . how did it go? . . . lest he should lose it! Listen! Ah, the surge the fullness of it!

*Alone I walked, I walked alone.
I sat upon a mossy stone.
I heard a bird up in the sky.
He sang so sweet and so did I!*

Green fields stretching away, trees, stones with soft moss, a bird, a bird !

“ Feivel, where holds one ? ”

Sickeningly, with the click of a trap, the walls of *chayder* shut to about him. An ecstasy was in his eyes. A mist of stupidity, helplessness, obscured their light. Oh, no ! oh, no ! he would make no pretence about it. He'd not been listening, he'd been away, singing ! . . . What did it matter ? Let the fist come down on his aching back ! Let the muscles of his arm be pinched and wrenched again. Listen, oh listen !

*I heard a bird up in the sky,
He sang so sweet and so did I.*

He lifted his wide eyes to his father. In an even voice he said, “ *Tatte*, I've not been listening ! ”

A thrill of subdued expectance went round the *chayder*. His enemies rubbed their grubby hands gleefully. One or two looked anxious.

But there was no explosion. In the same even tones Reb Monash said, “ *Nu*, and what hast thou been doing ? ”

Slowly Philip's sallow face flushed a deep crimson. Must he tell ? Must he stand there stripped of this new garment which had covered him, fragrant with spices and touched with the colours of a new dawn ? But it was the voice not of his own free lips, the voice ordered by some blind, strong dictate of the heart, that said, “ I was writing a poetry ! ”

A slight sound came from Reb Monash's lips. It was only dimly anger ; it was also resignation, dismay. His lips closed. The fires of his wrath last night had burned round his son, till at last Philip lay on the sofa, spent, lightless, like a cinder. He had thereon turned to Mrs. Massel who at one stage had ventured to

intervene. Would she like to see her son stuff his maws with pig ; or perhaps grow up to take a *shiksah* to his arms ? All that night low sobbing came from the room where Philip slept. Even when Reb Monash thought his wife sleeping, there came an answering moan from her bed as the sobbing of the boy entered the room like a frail ghost. Reb Monash turned his eyes upon his Hebrew notebook.

“Go thou ! go thou ! go !” he said heavily. “I’ll deal with thee later !”

Philip passed from the room. The walls of *chayder* were no more round him ; his head rang again with the poor music he had made.

“Mamma !” he said, bursting into the kitchen, “I’ve made a poetry !”

“Feivele !” she exclaimed with horror. “Why art thou not in *chayder* ?”

“He sent me out !” he answered, his lips quivering. “I’ve been a bad boy !”

“Then go out into the street !” she said. “He’ll see thee here and say I’m petting thee !”

He ran out into Angel Street. The lines were singing in his head. He skipped along Angel Street, from the wire factory to Doomington Road and back again, chanting his lines. Then Harry Sewelson, his pal, came into his mind. He would make use of his unusual liberty to go and tell him about the “poetry.” He ran breathlessly along Doomington Road to “Sewelson’s High-Class Drapery and Hosiery Establishment.” He passed through the side non-professional door along a dark lobby to the kitchen. Harry sat in a corner reading.

A sudden shame and reluctance overwhelmed Philip. What was he making all this fuss about ? Harry would only laugh at him, and why shouldn’t he ?

"Hello!" said Harry, "come in!"

Philip came forward. "What are you reading?" he asked.

"Poetry!" Harry replied.

This put a different complexion on affairs.

"I've just done a poetry!" Philip declared proudly, throwing his scruples aside. He had established an affinity with a printed book.

"Garn!" said Harry sceptically.

"Emmes!"

"Tell us then!"

*"Alone I walked, I walked alone.
I sat upon a mossy stone.
I heard a bird up in the sky.
He sang so sweet and so did I."*

There, what d'you think of that?"

"It's *not* your own!"

"Emmes adonoi!"

Harry looked up with warm commendation in his eyes.

"You know," he said, "it's like this feller!"

"Who's that?"

"Oh, this feller's called Tennyson!" he said, turning the leaves.

Philip drew a chair close and together they examined the faded penny reprint.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Philip excitedly. "Isn't that spiff!"

If the episode of the profane poem written during the sanctity of "Hebrew" had rendered Reb Monash sadly and half-consciously aware that in Philip he had nurtured a son who lay beyond the theoretic and practical bounds of his knowledge; a son who was so bewilderingly unlike

and unworthy of himself as he had been like and worthy of his father, and his father had been like and worthy of his grandfather, and so backward to whichever of the Twelve Tribes had fathered his race—if the episode of the poem produced in him only fears and doubts, it was the appearance of Mottele which crystallized for him the difference between the actual Philip and the Philip of his dreams.

The parents of Mottele had removed to Doomington from a smaller town in an adjacent county for the specific reason that Mottele had demanded more adequate instruction in Hebrew. They had moved even though the father had achieved a fair clientèle as a tailor in the town where he had settled, whereas the market in tailors for Doomington was already hopelessly glutted.

At the time when Mottele entered Reb Monash's *chayder* Mottele had passed his ninth, and Philip his tenth birthday. His mother, as she floated in amply behind the compact figure of Mottele, seemed rather an exhalation from Mottele than an important author of his existence. She was vague and large and benignant as a moon, shining with pale piety reflected from the central sun of Mottele. Mottele himself entered as one doomed only for a short while to range the treacherous zone of the fleshly. By an inverse law of gravity, his eyes were drawn upwards to the ceiling and thence to the mudless floors of Heaven where his elder brethren, the mediæval Rabbis and the early Prophets, awaited the quietus to the mundane phase of Mottele's piety. His general appearance betokened a rigid aloofness from the vulgar delights of the body. Both stud-holes of his waterproof collar were in excellent condition; the pockets which in most entrants to *chayder* were associated with the fecund bulges of boy-merchandise, displayed only a

siddler, a Prayer Book, emerging with propriety ; his stainless boots proved that the rapturous puddles of the roadway were unknown of his fastidious feet. Upon his head sat a little round peakless cap from which fell a demure fringe over his forehead. There was something sweet and thin, a little sickly almost, in the tender flute of his voice as it piped to Reb Monash's question a response as innocent as honey.

Upon Reb Monash Mottele produced an immediate and visible effect. He fell naturally into a manner towards him of affection, mingled with respect. "Here," he declared, "here truly is a Judaic child ! Just as at home ! No blackguarding in the streets, and his head never running this way and that to nothingness and Gentilehood. A credit to God and Man !"

Mottele seemed almost audibly to lap up the instruction tendered him, almost audibly, as a cat audibly laps milk ; you might almost see his sharp little tongue wash round the corners of his mouth to make sure that no drop of Jewish wisdom should be unabsorbed. During "Hebrew," he sat upon his corner of the form with a rapture of concentration worthy of some infant mystic vouchsafed the Beatific Vision. It was with no vulgar assertion of rights that his claim to one especial end on one especial form was recognized. His claim existed merely, and one might question as easily the claim of Reb Monash to thump the back for inattention. There was something both ludicrous and infuriating in the sight of some hulking fellow of twelve shuffling heavily away from the sacrosanct seat, as the result of some slight pathetic quiver in Mottele's eyelids.

Before long Mottele's bark was sailing the deep waters of the post-Pentateuchal Bible, while Philip's keel was still grinding against the elementary shingles of the "weekly portion." Mottele now became Reb

Monash's standard, before which all things else, at but a cursory reference, were revealed as dross. The state of Philip's spiritual health was shown to be perilous in the extreme. Now too Reb Monash developed a new theory.

"It is not that Feivel cannot!" he declared bitterly. "He *will* not! It suits him not to be a good Jew! Regard then Mottele! There is a jewel for you, there is an ornament for England, one shakes with delight of him in the *Polisher Shool*. One says in looking upon Mottele that there is hope still for the Hebrew race! Mottele . . . Mottele . . . Mottele! . . ."

Day after day the word Mottele droned or thundered in Philip's ears. All that was stifling in Angel Street and repressive in *chayder* took to itself for a name the three syllables of Mottele. The word began to lose for him all its physical connotation. Increasingly it became for him a symbol of injustice and despair.

Reb Monash had felt hitherto that the child of his dreams, such a child as would have been a living glory in Terkass, was almost of too exquisite a lineament for the reality of this godless England. But Mottele had undeceived him, for here in the very flesh was a child actually born in England and yet recalling irresistibly the piety of his own boyhood in Russia; a child such as he had been himself, at ten years an intimate of greybeards and an object of almost superstitious affection and reverence among the old women of the Synagogue. He would not confess it to himself, yet there seemed an element of injustice in the fact that he, Reb Monash, to whom surely, on the grounds of his own holiness and the uninterrupted holiness of his ancestry generation behind generation, such a son as Mottele was due, that *he* should be the father of so unsatisfactory a child as Philip. There was much he loved in Philip. Because of the very strength of his love for Philip, he assured himself, he

grieved so much to find Philip so far from his heart's desire. It was as much a matter of the happiness of Philip's own soul as of the happiness and credit of himself. But, he realized, to display to Philip or to Philip's mother, how deep was his love for his son, would be tantamount to an offence against God. It would sanction the delusion that he accepted Philip such as he was, whereas the Philip he strove after was far less like Philip than like himself or Mottele, after which image, with God's grace, he would yet convert his son. For there was much, he repeated, he loved in Philip ; as for instance his poetry, his imagination, which, wedded to Jewishness, the spiritual state called *Yidishkeit*, were a valuable possession, as he, in his oratory, himself frequently realized. On the other hand, the quality of poetry, unhealthily developed, might nourish errors concerning the primal verity of *Yidishkeit* which might land him into the pits of the unclean. There was a certain quality of the *rational* which up to a certain limit was likewise a decoration. It was a quality which could excellently elucidate a parable or examine an obscure text with the possible result of throwing upon it a naive and modern light very entertaining to the elders at the Synagogue ; but again, like all Philip's positive qualities, it had a negative aspect of the greatest spiritual danger. It was a God-sent bounty that had sent Mottele in his way—Mottele, who had imagination, but not to excess, who was rational, but not unhealthily. By placing the virtues of Mottele in a clear light before Philip, by the spectacle of the affection and esteem which Mottele commanded in the exercise of these virtues, both in *chayder* and in *shool*, the increasing contumacy he had observed with alarm in Philip would be broken down, and a son worthy of the traditions of Reb Monash adorn his home.

"I hate him!" Philip was saying to Harry, "I hate him!" His face was still wet with tears of vexation. His fists were clenched and his jaws were set viciously. He had only escaped that evening by slipping out through the front door after opening it for a septuagenarian panegyrist of Mottele.

"He's only a liar and a sucker-up!" he exclaimed. "He does it for just what he can get out of it! Thinks I can't see! Yah!" he growled in disgust.

"But listen!" said Harry, "Just listen to this!

*How could I look upon the day?
They should have stabb'd me where I lay,
Oriana—
They should have trod me into clay,
Oriana!*

What do you think of that? Isn't it fine? He seems to have had a rottener time even than Mottele's giving you! But isn't it grand stuff?"

"Yes, I know, I know! But tell me what I can do! I hate him! I want to kill him!"

Harry looked up reflectively. "Kill him?" he asked. "Stab him where he lies, Oriana! That's an idea, Philip! I can lend you a peashooter. Or, why not try a gonfalon? Gonfalons are awfully tricky!"

"You're laughing!" said Philip indignantly. "I wish you came to our *chayder*, you wouldn't laugh then, I can tell you!"

"But you talked about killing yourself, didn't you? Really, I don't know what to say! Kill him or try to forget about him!"

"Oh God, God!" said Philip, banging his forehead in despair. "It's so miserable! While I'm being half killed, he sits smiling and wiping his rotten nose!"

Harry looked up sympathetically.

"Else you could run away and be Two Little Vagabonds!" he suggested.

"Don't want to run away! He'd swank like one o'clock, the pig!" Philip said morosely. "Besides," he added in a slightly altered tone, "don't want to run away from mother! She'd be lonely! Oh, Harry, you're no help to a chap, you aren't!"

Yet the conversation was not wholly fruitless. It implanted in Philip the germ of more than one idea.

"*Rebbie*," said Mottele at dinner one Saturday afternoon, "my uncle, peace-be-upon-him, died on Thursday, no? I want to go and join the *minyons* at my auntie's house to-night."

"What good art thou at a *minyons*? Thou canst not make a tenth! Thou art in years still far from thy thirteenth year."

"But all the same it's a *mitzvah*?"

"Ah, true, true!" said Reb Monash, his eye full of benignant appreciation. "Go thou then. Thou art no big one and they will make room for thee. Bring thou in the best bread thou hast forgotten, Chayah," he said turning to his wife.

She rose and entered the parlour where Reb Monash kept the "best bread" locked in the sideboard. She placed the bread dutifully before her husband. It had latterly become the custom for Mottele to join the Massel family for dinner on the Sabbath mid-day. Reb Monash felt that his punctilious washing before meals, his prayers before food and his evident appreciation of the long blessing after food, could have nothing but the most exemplary effect upon Philip.

Philip writhed inwardly to find Reb Monash cut a couple of slices of the "best bread" (so dignified because

the flour was of a slightly superior brand and was varnished and sprinkled with black grain), one for Mottele and one for himself. The "second bread" lay at the other end of the table for the consumption of his mother, of Channah and, of course, of Philip. The treatment meted out respectively to Mottele and himself in *chayder* had inured him to indignity. This seemed, however, an unnecessary slight upon his mother, even if she was only a woman and therefore somewhat beyond the pale of masculine courtesies.

"As for thee, Feivel," said Reb Monash, "after dinner thou wilt stay indoors to say over to thyself the week's portion, while I take my few minutes' sleep. It was badly said by thee in *chayder* on Thursday evening. Thou didst halt three times, four times. When wilt thou learn to say it like Mottele? It was like a stream running, Chayah, the way Mottele said it, so clear, oh, a pleasure!"

Mottele's eyes were turned ceilingwards in a direction which had become habitual with him during the chanting of his praises. Praise produced in him no tremor of self-consciousness. It was his due. Being a good Jew had, there was ample authority, its celestial reward, but that did not render superfluous a certain meed of appreciation in this lesser mundane state.

It might be remonstrated here that Mottele displayed in abundant measure the qualities of "priggishness" already repudiated as an essential element in Philip's character. To which allegation the only reply must be that "priggishness" simply does not meet the Mottele case. "Priggishness" is a word defining a totally different collection of qualities; those persons to whom Mottele was a delight, and they were many, might have admitted that he was distinguished by a sort of precocity, but they felt this precocity definitely to demon-

strate how pleasant an odour was Mottele in the nostrils of the Lord, Whose providence had caused Rebecca to conceive at the premature age of three, the youthful Rabbi Achivah to develop the beard of senility in the course of a single night, and Mottele to be the thing he was. Those persons, on the other hand, to whom Mottele was more a stink than an odour, and it is to be regretted that Philip was one of these, would have laughed with pale scorn at the idea of disposing of Mottele as a "prig," Mottele, whose sweet face was a cauldron of infamy and whose voice was harsher than a Hell hag's lament over an escaped soul.

"But, *tatte*, can't I just go out to the corner of Angel Street?" asked Philip mournfully. He knew instinctively that utterance of the possibility put it effectively out of court.

"Thou wilt not go! Have I not spoken? Enough! *Nu*, Mottele, when thou goest to study in the *Yeshivah*, thou wilt come to see me, yes?"

Mottele began ingeniously to pun upon the word *Yeshivah*. Reb Monash beamed with delight.

"Well," said Reb Monash, when the carrot and potato dessert had been cleared away, "I go to sleep. One will see thee in the afternoon *shool*, Mottele, for *minchah*, eh?"

"God being so good, Reb Monash!"

"And forget thou not, Feivel! Not a foot into the street or thou wilt see then!"

"But Monash," broke in Mrs. Massel, "see how it is a fine day! Can't he just go out and get some air in the street?"

"So thou must take his part, Chayah, *nu*? It will not harm him to go without air. The Torah if he will imbibe will do him more good!"

"*A guten Shabbos!*" said Mottele quietly as he slid

through the door, "A good Sabbath!" Philip looked towards him in a passion of dumb hate. Mottele halted for the fraction of a moment with a trace of virtuous aloofness and a slightly lifted head. There followed a quick flash of vivid red thrust through his teeth, and the door closed softly behind him.

"I'll show him! I'll show him! I'll show him!" the words pealed through Philip's head. "The devil! I'll give it him! Oh, s'elp me if I don't!"

"To thy *chumish* then!" said Reb Monash as he climbed the stairs.


Philip sat down on a dusty form in the deserted *chayder*. He turned to a chapter in Genesis and started mumbling aloud. He mumbled on to the end. He repeated the portion again, having already ascertained that his knowledge of it was as thorough as his knowledge of anything could be. He repeated it stupidly a third and a fourth time. He knew that his father would be sleeping for an hour—no more, no less. Was he to go on mumbling and mumbling for a hot solid hour? Oh, what did it all mean, this soupy stuff, what sense had it, what poetry?

He remembered with a qualm of longing a line or two Harry had found somewhere:

*O Brignall banks are wild and fair
And Greta woods are green. . . .*

But this! . . . mumble, mumble, mumble, that's all it was . . . rubb-ish! as Miss Tibbet used to say. What! Rubbish? Oh, sinful thought! He laid his fingers dismayfully against his sinning lips. After all, Mottele had nothing to do with the inception of the Bible; neither had father, for that matter. The Bible was something awful and unutterable and it was . . . Oh, there weren't any words for it! And he'd said

rubbish ! Yet God would understand he hadn't really meant it. Besides, if God were a young boy kept in mumbling all a Saturday afternoon, He might say unfortunate things about the Bible, even though He's written it all Himself. But how close it was in here ! What a headache he had ! He wasn't supposed to go into the kitchen and talk to his mother. But it *was* stuffy, horribly stuffy . . . and he knew every word in his *chumish* seven times over. Oh, not so well as Mottele, oh, no, oh, no ! That wasn't to be expected ! Did anybody know anything so well as Mottele ? How he hated Mottele ! He knew that poetry was beginning to have a hold over his affections second only to his mother. But he didn't love poetry half so passionately as he hated Mottele. That reminded him. *He* wasn't going to let Mottele stick his tongue out at him, after Mottele had polluted the house with his presence at dinner. No, he'd first cut his throat three times, that he would !

Where was it now, where was it ?  He hunted about in his pockets. One possession, and not for intrinsic reasons, Philip prized above all others. It was a smooth chip, several inches long. Some months ago now he had determined to assure himself of some record of the indignities heaped upon him, directly or indirectly caused by Mottele ! The idea of the notched stick was very popular with the heroes of romance. Yes, that would be just the thing, a notched stick ! His stick was already notched all the way down one side and well down the other. Oh, yes, it was in the left trouser pocket ! Strictly he wasn't supposed to transfer anything from his weekday to his Saturday pockets. Nothing must be carried on a Saturday. But he could not afford to be without his notched stick even on Saturdays. It was the only thing which maintained in him a degree

of sanity when some peculiarly injurious comparison had been made between Mottele and himself. He clutched t grimly inside his pocket and assured himself of some ultimate and lurid vengeance. Torture perhaps, some form of slow assassination during which Mottele was all the time precisely aware of the assassin. "Kill him!" Harry had suggested. What was that phrase of Channah's? . . . "Many a true word's spoken in jest!"

He hardly dared to notch the stick while it was still *Shabbos*. Besides, his knife was in his weekday trousers. He'd not forget . . . But this headache! Father would be safely sleeping for a time yet. He'd just creep along the lobby tip-toe and see what his mother was doing.

"Mamma, Mamma, hello!" She was sitting in the meagre light of the window. The kitchen around her was scrupulously clean. A pair of cheap steel-rimmed spectacles lay on her nose; she was reading the Yiddish version of the Bible, intended especially for women.

"Fievele," she said, "thou shouldst be repeating thy *chumish* now, thou shouldst not be here!"

"I've got such a headache, Mamma," he murmured clasping his forehead with a somewhat exaggerated gesture. "I want to go out for a minute or two! I'm stuffed!"

"But he said 'no'!"

"I've finished now. I know it all. What more can I do?"

"Thou must not think of it!"

"Ah, let me," he said appealingly, "only a minute or two!"

"What will he say to me, Feivele? Better go not!"

"Oh, I'll be back straight away! Or I'll tell you what; you stand at the front door, and when he starts getting up wave your hand and I'll be back in a jiffy, long before he's down. Ah *do*, Mamma!"

"If thou hast a headache it is best for thee to be outside!" she said uneasily. "Go then. But forget not the moment I wave to thee, thou art back!"

Philip darted to the door.

"One second!" she said, "here's an apple for thee! I got just one—for thee!"

"What a lovely Mamma! Thank you, thank you!"

It was a forlorn little figure stood at the Angel Street corner of Doomington Road. He saw the crowded tram-cars go up the road towards an urban simulation of moorland called "Baxter's Hill." But beyond it green, real country began . . . and there was a river. . . He saw the boys of Angel Street playing games with a positively weekday enthusiasm. He had wanted particularly to go and talk about Tennyson and things with Harry this afternoon! How much luckier a lot had been cast for Harry! There was a genial, vaguely terrifying unorthodoxy about his parents which sometimes verged upon the license of the sheerly Gentile. They carried money on Saturdays! Mrs. Sewelson put the kettle on the fire with her own hands on Saturdays. But he wouldn't change his own mother for a hundred anybody-else's mothers, he vowed, his eyes softening, his teeth biting into the apple she had given him.

Would it be congenial to bite Mottele? No! that was girlish—and he'd have such a sweet, nasty taste. No! he'd just pommel him, the "dog's body" (he had heard the phrase on the lips of Lena Myer in description of a young gentleman who had transferred his attention from Miss Myer to another lady). Ah, one minute!

What was that Mottele had said about going to attend a prayer-for-the-dead meeting at his auntie's house? Gosh! Here was an idea! S'elp me if Mottele wouldn't have to attend his own prayer-for-the-dead meeting! By heaven, Mottele had gone far enough! It was about time he got some of his own back!

Surely, Mother was waving! Oh, yes, certainly she was! He doubled back like a rabbit surprised on the edge of a thicket. When his father entered the room he was safely mumbling away.

"Feivel, thou art panting!" said Reb Monash suspiciously.

"I've been crying!" replied Philip sullenly.

"So? Well, let me hear what thou dost with thy *chumish* now! Mind not one mistake, or thou wilt not stir from the house after *Shabbos* one step!"

Philip recited the portion with flawless accuracy. The week was duly ushered in with the night service of the Sabbath. It was dark when Philip made his way along Doomington Road and turned to the right past the Bridgeway Elementary School along the side of it skirted by Blenheim Road. The road led to a slightly loftier stratum of Doomington, past gloomy brick-crofts which rose into the muddy hills on one side and sank into clayey pools on the other, and it was along this road that Mottele was bound to pass after the service on his return home. Force of habit would lead him along the right side, from which the ground sloped downwards. Rain brought the yellow mud sluicing from the hills on the opposite side, rendering it therefore unpalatable for such delicate boots as Mottele's.

The red tongue of his enemy, a slight enough offence in itself, but by accident a consummation of so much preceding injury, had gone more venomously to Philip's heart than Mottele had intended. Disregarding the unwisdom of soiling his Saturday suit, Philip lay down to begin his vigil. Mottele was a long time in arriving. No doubt, Philip mused, he was sucking in the praise due to him for gratuitously walking up to Longton to take part in the service. Philip passed his fingernail down the notches in his stick. Twenty-five, twenty-six . . . a dull anger stupefied him . . . twenty-nine . . . One after one in gibbering disorder, the occasions immortalized on the notched stick recreated themselves in his mind.

"Mottele, oh, an Israel glory is Mottele!"

"Mottele, Mottele, Mottele! . . ."

Curse Mottele . . . the "dog's body"! And here was Mottele turning round the bend in the road, his detestable little figure caught in the rays of a lamp. Good, good! He was bound to pass that way. He slid his body a couple of yards cautiously. That brought him nearly to the deep part of the pond . . . Two feet deep, at most, but that would do! Ah, glory to God, here he was!

It was over surprisingly quickly. He rushed out upon the unsuspecting Mottele, fell upon him and dragged him irresistibly over the edge of the pavement towards the pond. They swung there for a moment or two against its edge. Philip felt Mottele's fingers tighten in his hair. Mottele seemed to remove not only his cap but half his scalp. The next moment Mottele lay squelching in the ooze.

“Yah, Israel’s glory, how d’you like that? Yah, dog’s body!”

There was a spluttering. Then in Yiddish, “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will show thee!” In English followed, “Yer bloody bastard!”

But a sudden and ghastly fear had gripped Philip. A realization of the enormity of his crime possessed him. He swept the grass blindly for a cap, lifted it, and ran down the Blenheim Road, his heart thumping in a tumult of dismay.

He had been in the house for about twenty minutes when Reb Monash asked: “Feivel, whose cap art thou wearing?”

Philip took his cap off. With a grimace he discovered it was Mottele’s. He’d know sooner or later anyhow. It was quite useless to lie about it.

“Mottele’s!” he replied.

“Where didst thou get it?”

No answer.

Threateningly, in crescendo:

“Where didst thou get it?”

“Found it!”

“Where? Say thou where, at once!”

There was a loud knocking at the door. Reb Monash remained in ignorance but a few seconds longer. A deputation poured into the kitchen. It consisted of two or three women, an old man gabbling indignantly, the father of Mottele, the mother of Mottele, and in her arms, swathed in a shawl, the soaked, screaming Mottele himself.

“It is well!” said Reb Monash shortly. “It is well!” he said quietly and grimly. “You may go! We shall

be happy together, Feivel and I ! ” he added with acid humour.

Philip was conscious of the strained white face of his mother staring from the candle-lit gloom of the scullery. He didn't mind these things himself so fearfully much . . . but somehow she never seemed able to get used to them . . . ah well, he'd had his whack . . . the sooner it was over ! . . .

CHAPTER V

NOT the most enthusiastic observer could have foretold the growth of a friendship between Philip and Mottele. On the other hand, Reb Monash regarded with some alarm the growing relations between his son and Harry Sewelson. He was not wholly satisfied that a sound Jewish atmosphere ruled in the Sewelson household, but his own path and theirs were too far apart for any accurate ascertainment. Though they did not live far away the Sewelsons were neither relatives nor *landsleit*; and it was a fact that *landsleit*, that is, folk who have emigrated from the same region or township in Eastern Europe, knew more of each other's affairs though they lived at opposite ends of Doomington, than folk who had originated from different provinces of the Exile, even though these lived in the same street. He remembered with a certain dismay how upon the first occasion that Philip had invited his friend to Angel Street, Sewelson had instinctively removed his cap upon entering the kitchen—an act which, perversely enough to non-Jewish minds, is not merely bad manners in an orthodox Jewish house, but positively savours of sin.

Harry had sat there quietly, but his grey eyes keenly observant. He had entered the conversation, however, with a certain fertility of Yiddish vocabulary and idea which more nonplussed Reb Monash than won him over. When he sat down to bread and butter and tea

with Philip, his prayer-before-food was so rapid and brief a mumble as to suggest either ignorance or contempt.

"It likes me him not, this young man!" declared Reb Monash with some anxiety. But there was not at this time any specific reason for forbidding the friendship between the two lads; so that when *chayder* and *shool* left room for the dissipation, Philip was away up Doomington Road and in the kitchen beyond the Drapery and Hosiery Establishment.

"I don't know what it is," Philip was saying, "I don't know what it is about poetry. Somehow, you can get away with it. It's like a . . . it's like a road, isn't it? You start in Angel Street and you start walking and hey, hullo! where are you?"

"You're right and you're wrong!" declared Harry. He was now a mature man of twelve, and in ways more or less subtle was fond of rendering the disparity of a year between them apparent to Philip. "It's more'n that, I think. It can take you away, but it can keep you there as well. You understand better what it all means. You *understand*, that's what poetry means!" he declared solemnly, his face assuming an aspect of such inscrutable wisdom as Philip might or might not penetrate.

"I *can't* understand!" said Philip morosely. "It's too big to try. Besides I *don't* want to understand, so there! It's rotten, the whole thing's rotten, *chayder* and Angel Street and *shool* and the lads and everything. I hate it all and I don't want to understand it. I just *feel* that poetry's nice, a million times nicer than all this everywhere. . . ." He pointed comprehensively beyond and round the walls of the kitchen to include the whole of life as it presented itself to him.

"What a girly-girly word, *nice*!" scoffed Harry.

"You ought to be careful what words you say or you'll never get a scholarship. Poetry is *not* nice—it's splendid, and magnificent and all that sort of thing. *Nice!* Ugh!"

"Well, you know what I mean!" said Philip uncomfortably. The tendency to jibe at him was a somewhat distracting trait that had manifested itself in his relations with Harry. The wholly undefined idea stirred vaguely within him that Harry treated him somewhat as he treated poetry—as something out of which he could make intellectual capital, something to make use of—like chewing gum which you kept on chewing and chewing until there wasn't any more chew in it, and then you just stuck it under a chair and forgot about it. But he speedily shook off ideas of this disturbing kind. Life was already sufficiently complicated without mixing it up with silly old bogeys which led nowhere. Moreover, his friendship with Harry was worth it, if only for the sake of discussing poetry.

"Poetry makes you *feel* funny!" said Philip. "It's nicer'n singing or pictures. It doesn't let you think at all . . . I mean thinking like thinking out sums about how many herrings in a barrel at twelve and sixpence what's one and a half next week! See?"

"There's thinking and thinking!" Harry postulated. "There's thinking about herrings and a half—and thinking about philoserphy!" he declared pompously.

"Philwhaterphy?" asked Philip with a mixture of scepticism and reverence.

"Philoserphy!"

"Whatever does that mean?"

"Oh, knowing all about things upside down!"

"What's that got to do with Tennyson?" Philip asked smartly, as if he had rather scored a point.

"Tennyson never says anything at all about jography or mensuration. I suppose he forgot all about 'em when he left school!" Philip continued.

"That shows all you know! Philoserphy is something bigger'n jography. Got nothing to do with it!"

"What's Tennyson's philoserphy?"

"Oh, it's better to be an Englishman than a Chinee!" Harry decided, expanding his bosom with vicarious patriotism.

"I like carrots more'n cabbage! Is that philoserphy?" asked Philip, in some slight fear of his intellectual patron.

"There's a lot more in it, too!" replied Harry somewhat uneasily, disregarding his friend's levity. "In the spring a young man comes out all spots and goes and gets married! There!"

"Humph! I s'pose there's lots of philoserphies and things in Tennyson!" agreed Philip, not wholly convinced. "But I like poetry because it's . . . because it's got . . . Oh, I don't know what to say! You know!"

"Well anyhow, I know why I like poetry!" Harry insisted.

"You know the song we're singing in school? It goes:

*Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands.
Curtsey'd when you have and kissed,
The wild waves whist!*

"Now when they're all singing it, I hate singing it. It all gets lost in twiddly-bits. I just say it, slowly, and not listening to the class. See how it goes, like kids dancing at Mother-Ice-cream's organ,

Come unto these yellow sands!

and then you all sort of stop a minute and go slowly, like drilling, only beautifuller.

And then take hands !

And have you ever seen what a lot of 'w's' there is in that line. Just listen :—

The wild waves whist !

I wonder if that's done on purpose ? ”

“ Of course it is ! ” Harry said with a note of superiority in his voice. “ That's what they call 'alliteration !' They have a dictionary and put down all the nice words beginning with one letter and then they start writing poetry. It's very clever ! ”

“ Yes, it is *too* clever ! ” agreed Philip, embarrassingly conscious of a whole field of technical difficulty yet to be ploughed before attaining the happy position of a Tennyson. “ Now she didn't tell us who wrote that poem ? Who was it ? ”

“ That *poetry* ! ” stressed Harry, with an ironic reminiscence of an error not long thrown over by his friend, “ was by William Shakespeare. Better than Tennyson they *do* say ! ”

“ Better than Tennyson ! ” Philip repeated with something of horror at the irreverence. “ But Tennyson was a *Lord* ! ”

“ Well, Lords are not everything ! Some Lords' grandfathers were just beer-house men ! ” exclaimed a democratic Harry.

“ What was this Shakespeare, anyhow ? I think we used to do a recitation by him all about stiffening the sinews, didn't we ? ”

“ He was in a stable, and pinched rabbits from a woman called 'Lowsy Lucy' ! That's *his* life story ! ”

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“And yet he wrote all that about coming to these yellow sands and then holding hands! But he can’t really be better than Tennyson. He never wrote those lines about hollyhocks. Do you remember? Like this:

*Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily!*

Those are the beautifullest lines all over anywhere!”

“A bit of a tongue twister, eh? Makes you pronounce all your aitches like “hammer hammer hammer on the hard high road!” Harry blasphemed, twinkling.

“Oh don’t, don’t!” exclaimed Philip, a catch of pain in his voice.

“Anyhow there isn’t any philoserphy in those lines! And *you* don’t know what hollyhocks are? How can you like the lines? It’s swank!”

“I don’t know! It might be because I don’t know, I like the lines. But I *do* know it’s a flower; and when I see the real flower I’ll be glad to see it. But it’s got nothing to do with the poetry. That’s just by itself:

*Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily!”*

“Never mind, never mind!” said Harry sapiently, “you’ll grow older some day!”

“I wonder!” mused Philip. “But look here, what’s the time? Crutches! Half-past eight! Got to be in bed at nine! So-long, Mr. Philoserphy!”

“So long till next time!” returned the sage, settling himself down to his book. “*O revower!*”

As Philip ran along Doomington Road he could not help halting at the floral establishment half-way home

which recently had initiated a forlorn crusade against the artistic apathy of the neighbourhood. Already, it was evident, the high ideals of Madame Smythe, Floriste, were being tarnished by the rust of compromise. She had opened her establishment with a blaze of purely floral splendour. There were rose trees entering into bloom, lilies, bunches of garden flowers, democratic pots of geranium and fuchsia, tall tulips, narcissi ; and as a subfusc groundwork, wooden boxes of bulbs, manures, weed killers, syringes and packets of seed. It was not long before young vegetables were introduced, ostensibly on the ground that vegetables such as potatoes and peas had a floral as well as a dietetic significance. And now hoary potatoes, full-grown carrots, unblushing turnips, made an almost animal show among the fragility of creeper and flowers.

None the less Madame Smythe's shop was the nearest thing to poetry in the concrete that Philip had yet encountered. Not a day passed but that Philip on his return from school flattened his nose against the floristic window-pane, his eyes dazzled with delight, albeit calceolaria and hyacinth equally were mere words to him.

One day he observed that a new glory arose from Madame Smythe's tallest and most expensive vase. It took the shape of three flowers which he had not seen before (he had not seen them for the reason that Madame Smythe opened the shop in spring, and the new-comers were autumn flowers). They were fluffy masses of numberless soft yellow petals, bending slightly on their stalks like a gracious and lovely woman. Oh, the rapture of burying a nose in these fragrant sweet cushions, the rapture of seeing one of them upon his mother's blouse till her own brown eyes caught additional gold from the gold of these blooms !

*Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily,*

he murmured. Ah, the scrumptious hollyhocks! That's what they were of course! Hollyhocks! "Heavily hangs the hollyhock!" That's *just* what these flowers were doing! He had no sooner coupled the name with the flower than by the easiest process in the world the flower and the name became one. No wonder Tennyson wrote poetry about hollyhocks! Just look how each little petal curled so exquisitely, each petal fresh as morning, yet chiselled finely into perfect form!

"Wouldn't it be spiff to buy a hollyhock and give it to mother, saying (as one always said in romance), 'For the Fairest!' then bowing gallantly!" he mused. "What can I do? I get a ha'p'ny a week, when I'm good, from father. I'll be good for three weeks. That'll be three-ha'pence. Then I'll go in and buy a hollyhock. Oo, what fun!"

The second and third halfpennies were added to the first, not without depressions in the barometer of virtue. He shyly entered the shop of his ambitions.

"Can I have a hollyhock, please, ma'am!"

"*A hollyhock?* I'm sorry, young man, we don't keep no hollyhocks!"

A look of grievous disappointment came into Philip's face. His voice trembled.

"But please, ma'am," he said, "you've had some hollyhocks in the window and somebody's bought 'em and now you've got some more hollyhocks!"

"Gracious! what *can* the young man want! We ain't got no hollyhocks! Just show me what you mean!"

Philip approached the lattice-work which separated the shop from the shop window. He pointed to

the vase where his hollyhocks bloomed rich and desirable.

"One of those hollyhocks, please!" he said.

"Hollyhocks!" she snorted. "Hollyhocks! Haw, haw, haw! Lawks! Them's chrysanthemums! Haw, haw, haw!"

Philip's disappointment deepened. It was the glamour of the word no less than the actual flower that had drawn his feet to pilgrimage. But Madame Smythe had lifted the vase of chrysanthemums from the window.

"One, did you say?" she inquired, resuming business.

"Yes, one, please!" he assented, with trepidation.

"Here you are, sir, thank you!"

He opened his hands where the halfpennies lay warm and wet. He placed his three coins on the counter.

"What!" she snapped, somewhat dangerously. "Sixpence, if you please!"

"I—I—I'm sorry!" he said weakly and blushing violently, "I'm sorry! I haven't got any more!"

"Go home!" said Madame Smythe more genially, melting as she perceived the lad's embarrassment. "Go home and tickle your fat aunt! Tell her I told you!"

Now even if they weren't hollyhocks, and he reflected bitterly that he had had no warrant for calling them hollyhocks, he wasn't going to be humiliated in this way. No! not even if they cost ninepence, let alone sixpence. No, he was going to buy a hollyhock, that is to say a chrysanthemum, for his mother, even if he died for it! How could he get sixpence? An appalling sum,

on the further side even of avarice, but he was going to get it, and he already had three-ha'pence, anyhow !

Another three weeks of comparative virtue swelled his total to threepence. Two separate ha'p'nies from his sister Dorah (who had been married for years and lived up in Longton), and he was worth fourpence. It was a point of honour not to receive the slightest subsidy from his mother towards her own gift. A ha'p'ny borrowed from Harry and three-ha'pence from the sale of an enormous number of Dandy Dave's chronicled exploits brought him the desired total.

He marched boldly into Madame Smythe's establishment. "One chrysanthemum, please !" he demanded.

"Come again, Johnny, eh ? Got the money this time ? "

"Of course I have ! "

"Hoity-toity ! All right, my lord ! "

"Here you are, ma'am ! " he said, as he received the flower wrapped in tissue-paper and handed over his coins.

"I say ! I say ! Mr. Rich ! You've given me too much ! "

"But you said sixpence ! "

"Oh, that was weeks ago ! They're cheaper now ; they're only threepence ! "

He was sickened to think he had allowed the extra weeks to pass by thus unchrysanthemumed. "Give me another ! " he demanded haughtily to convince Madame Smythe of his superiority to all consideration of money.

The kitchen was crowded when Philip entered with his flowers and he slipped in unnoticed to join his mother in the scullery.

"Mamma," he said shyly, "I've brought you a present all for yourself!"

"Oh, Feivele, sweet child, how lovely! But the money, where didst thou get the money from?"

"I've been saving up, Mamma. But never mind about that! You've got to take these flowers and wear them on your blouse!"

"But I can't, Feivele! It's not right a married woman should wear flowers. Knowest thou not a Jewish woman must not wear her own hair? How then shall I wear flowers? And what will thy *tatte* say? I can't, my child!"

"Oh, Mamma I've been saving up for such a long time just to buy 'em for you. And now you don't want 'em. It's rotten, it's real rotten of you!"

"I do want them; see, look where I put them in this jar. They'll be here a long time, while I'm standing in the scullery, washing up and peeling potatoes. And when they're dead, Feivele, they'll still be living inside me. Dost thou understand? Thou art a good child!" she said, "God bless thee!" She bent down and kissed his forehead.

. . . It was memories such as these and such chance snatches of poetry that kept Philip that evening against the window-pane of Madame Smythe, Floriste, for many contemplative minutes. Nine o'clock had passed when at last he entered the kitchen of Number Ten Angel Street.

"Regard the hour!" said Reb Monash. "Thou hast been squandering the hours with Sewelson! It likes me not that Sewelson! What about thy scholarship! Thou shouldst have been in to-night studying for thy scholarship after *chayder*. Much success thou wilt win!"

"Oh, I forgot about the scholarship!" said Philip

apologetically. “*Emmes, tatte*, I’ll be in all to-morrow night studying the history book !”

“Well, we shall see then ! Go to bed now, at once ! Good night !”

“Good night all !”

Philip had recently been chosen as one of the candidates for the Doomington School Scholarship Examination by the master of Standard Seven, whither Philip’s talents in “Grammar and Composition” had brought him with unusual rapidity. Reb Monash was delighted that his son was progressing at least along the road to Gentile scholarship. His experience contained the records of several young men whose earlier years had been devoted to the mastery of secular knowledge, which, in due time, only turned them with the more zeal to Jewish wisdom, whereto all other accomplishments were but footnotes and commentaries ; these young men had actually been enabled through their Gentile wisdom to study the Bible and the Talmud from a new, and sometimes from a broader, point of view. He himself could read English well and was no mean scholar of the Russian and German literatures. In addition to which, of course, was his profundity in Hebrew lore, which gave him an honoured position among the very circle of the Rabbis.

“It will do him no harm !” said Reb Monash. “If he will be like Moishe Nearford I will not be displeased. You know Moishe Nearford, the Long One ? Not only was he high in Doomington School but he went on to the university where one respected him, God and Man. And yet a Jew is he, a perfect one. Never goes out with any other girl, only his sister you’ll see on his arm, week after week. A real Jew, say I, and a real brother ! And what about Moses Montefiore ? He would stand up in

the House of Parliament while one talked of taxes and India and face the East and start shaking [himself over his *davenning*! But let him be like Moishe Nearford, let alone Moses Montefiore, and I am content!"

So it came about that a tacit understanding existed for the next few months between Reb Monash and Philip that the old Spartan devotion to *chayder* and *shool* was temporarily not expected from him. It was not in the least that Reb Monash deviated one whit from the ideal by whose pattern he had determined to shape Philip; nor that Philip found one whit more congenial the ideal thus created, an ideal so near to Mottele as by that reason alone to be repugnant. It was, to simplify the issue, a state of truce.

During this period, while Philip was reading for his own examination, Harry was elected to a scholarship, not indeed to the older foundation of Doomington School, which was the goal of Philip's endeavours, but to the modern Council institution called the Highfield Grade School, for which Harry's more astute and vehement personality seemed to fit him more readily than for the fourth-century romanticism of Doomington School. Yet only partly to keep abreast with his friend did Philip apply himself to hard reading of a less congenial kind than poetry. It is at a very early stage in the fortunes of Angel Street youth that the shadows of tailor shop and grocery stores begin to cloud the dawn. Before the meaning of such liberty as Angel Street can afford has been grasped, it is time to study the lines of slavery. So early then had the grinding fear of a sweated agony in a factory over the Mitchen turned Philip's mind towards his only escape, to further and further schooling, beyond the boundaries of the Bridgeway Elementary School. Perhaps more immediately he felt that Doomington

School would leave him free to tread the primrose path of poetry. He envisioned such black-gowned masters as figured in the adventures of Master Tom Merry ; saw them walking along groves academe hidden somewhere behind the walls of Doomington School ; and at their heels, imbibing the poetry these gentlemen read from gold-clasped poets illuminated upon parchment richer than the Scrolls of the Law at the *Polisher Shool*, a crowd of emotional youths, who only turned from poetry in order to practise at the nets or consume at Ma Pott's tuck-shop illimitable pastry.

He applied himself with fervour to French verbs, the Gulf Stream, and the vexed question of herrings in barrels. He discovered that at a certain stage in his reading the letters on the page before him lost their antique stability and began to pirouette across the page, bowing their heads, and, in the case of the genus "f" and "g," swishing their tails indecorously ; soon everything would melt in a mist of grey until only by shutting his eyes and relaxing every ocular nerve he could resume his vision.

"Father !" he declared, "it gets all mixed up on the paper when I've been reading a long time. I think I need spectacles !"

"Thou canst not study," asked Reb Monash, "without wanting to be like thy elders ? Go then, go ! I did not want spectacles till I was five-and-thirty and I read more by the time I was ten than thou shalt have read when thou art thirty ! Go then, go ! Thine eyes are well enough !"

It was in the paper on geometry that his bad sight brought swiftest disaster. He had solved one or two propositions with infinite difficulty. He stared so hard and long at the paper before him on an indecipherable mass of angles and lines that the *danse funèbre* began

sooner than usual. When his vision arrived at the stage of opacity he laid his pen down in a mood of bitter resentment. . . . He felt himself for the first time hating his father with a conscious hate.

The examination was being held in the Meeting Hall of Doomington School. He looked over the backs of his bent industrious competitors towards the tall arched windows. These, on their outer side, were cut by a black parapet, leaving only the upper half of the windows on that side of the hall open to the daylight. He saw dimly a dark mass moving leisurely along the parapet, now appearing behind the windows, now disappearing behind the intervening walls. It seemed almost like one of the peccant letters on his paper, incarnate in bulk. The long tail wagged playfully. Philip blinked and stared intently. It was a large and amiable rat. The rat disappeared beyond the further windows and left Philip staring blankly. The rat found the destination he had been making for unworthy of his continuous esteem. He sauntered pleasantly back and then, discovering that an incident of more than usual interest was taking place in the hall, he sat down on his haunches and looked on in friendly concern. Philip felt the rat's eyes looking interestedly down upon his own. He could have sworn that the rat inclined his head with the gesture of a commendatory uncle.

"Never mind, old lad!" said the rat. "You're making a howling mess of your geometry, it's true! If Mister Blabberthwaite, the geometry man, had the least say in the matter there'd be no chance for *you*, my hearty. And you've by no means gratified my expectations regarding your geography paper, I must say. It was, perhaps, coming it a bit thick to ask the names of all the capes on the American sea-board, that I admit; but that wasn't any excuse for chucking Flamborough

Head at the mouth of the Irrawaddy which, if I mistake not, is not in America at all. It's in Queensland or something of the sort. However, *that's* no odds! Don't worry, I feel a strong suspicion that Doomington School will make room for you yet . . . although don't breathe a word, or it's all u.p., to use a vulgarism. No, not a word! The truth is," whispered the rat, lifting a silencing paw to his nose, "Mr. Furness and I have got something up our sleeves for you, something you can't guess; but it's there right enough. *Verb. sap.*, as people invariably say upon arriving at my own respectable age. But Esmeralda's squeaking, old chap! Sorry I can't stay . . . but these wives, you know! . . . Well, so long, so long, and keep going! So long!" And the rat resumed his urbane path.

It was impossible to get down to his geometry again, his head was swimming. He rose and deposited his papers before the dignified grey-haired worthy at the door, who, if he wasn't Mr. Furness, the head master, was at least, surely, the Principal Governor of the School.

When they placed the subjects for an English essay before him and he read:

"A day in my favourite church."

or

"What is the meaning of Empire Day?"

or

"The Place of Poetry in Cities,"

with a shout of inner exultance which, he feared, would lift the roof of his skull, he realized precisely the good fortune which Messrs. Furness and Rat had been retaining for him up their joint sleeves. He betook himself to "The Place of Poetry in Cities" with a secret

fear that the ink-pot could not possibly contain sufficient ink, a fear counteracted by the dismal thought that only one hour was allowed him to express his opinion upon the subject of which he was the prime authority in all Britain.

"The Place of Poetry in Cities," he began with anticipatory *panache*, "is so great that it abolishes cities and turns the mud rivers into rivers of silver. There is," he continued with anti-climax, "nothing like it." But he soon resumed the tenour of his flight. Philip was, in fact, affirming his creed, affirming the philosophy he had attained after eleven and a half years of brick and mud, of stupidity, error, false ideals, of that living poetry spelled by the half-hidden love between his mother and himself, of that poetry in words which, without this living poetry, could not have unfolded her secrets to a child immersed in an almost unbroken despair. His pen scratched furiously along. Too swiftly, too swiftly, the minutes raced round the rim of his borrowed watch. Frequently the green meadows of his writing were patined with flowers from the poets he had discovered, Campbell, Moore, Tennyson, Longfellow, and when these failed him, an impromptu verse from Philip Massel bubbled from his simmering brain. He was vaguely conscious of the approach towards him of a clean-shaven man, with a strong, red face, firm of jaw; but clad in such inexpensive clothing as obviously to denote him the caretaker or, perhaps, the drilling instructor. He was aware with a slight annoyance that the man hung for some minutes over his paper and then very lightly placed his hand on Philip's head. There was something quiet and fine and firm in that gesture. Perhaps he wasn't the drilling instructor? Perhaps he was a real master with a large family and he couldn't afford to wear brand-new clothing? What did it matter? . . .

“so that the chimneys all seem to be made of gold and the poor men are like princes. . . .”

The stage arrived when he could no longer see the lines on which he was writing or the letters he was forming. Still his pen raced along. The tip of his pen disappeared in a mist like the top of a telegraph pole in a November fog. His forehead was clammy with sweat. His forefinger and thumb hurt horribly. And what was that? Some fool was clanging the bell! That meant he must stop! Oh, the fool! Faster still and faster! He felt that his eyes must fall from his sockets. Tears of effort were rolling down his face. At last! At last! “. . . for Poetry takes us from the cities of bricks and mud to a land full of beauty like the night is full of stars!”

The dignitary of the receiving-desk by the door stared curiously at him. He staggered out, half-blind, but filled with a great calm. The days that followed were days of a confident lassitude. The decision lay on the knees of the Rat and Mr. Furness, and he was content to wait.

When the information arrived that Philip Massel had won his scholarship, Reb Monash buried Philip's head in his moustache and beard. “Now,” he said, his voice quivering, “thou wilt be a Jew and a Human, a credit to God and Man!”

Another matter of satisfaction was the fact that Mottele looked enviously towards him and made deliberate advances. And when he went to tell his sister Dorah, in Longton, it was surprising to find her stiff angular figure bending down and the hard mouth with strange vehemence kissing him. Sixpence and a new overcoat of a wonderful fluffy grey followed from the same quarter. Channah cried and bought him a little volume of selections from a poet called Shelley.

But he appreciated nothing as he appreciated the pan of onions his mother fried for him, all in curly brown strips and steeped in butter ; and more onions, and more onions, until he had had enough. And his mother looked at him, and he understood, for the voice that asked for another plateful was choked not merely by fried onions.

BOOK II

FORWARD FROM PHYLAETERIES

CHAPTER VI

PHILIP realized at no earlier age than is customary that life, anyhow externally, is a succession of illusions, and that, if reality actually exists, it must be isolated from facts and days, this inner reality being governed by one set of laws and the outer appearance by another. So that while poetry still dominated the inner boy as with a rod of changeless reality, he found it necessary to abandon, for instance, the old fancy of Doomington School in favour of the present fact.

It was a matter of acute disappointment to him that one convention laid down by all his reading was not observed; for he was not seized by a group of young gentlemen clad principally in Eton suits and top hats to be immersed in a stream which ought surely to have flowed somewhere through the precincts of the school. The front of the building solidly enough lined a narrow central street of Doomington. A further aspect, and one which seemed to conclude its periphery, was seen beyond the grassless ground adjoining an even older institution. From no vantage were the leafy summits of trees to be seen and no stream issued from any portcullised arch in the walls. It was the antique Mitchen alone which thrust turbid ink in any visible proximity. But what secret bowers and what green places were hidden beyond

the walls, some mysterious how contained in her unfathomed spaces, who could tell ?

He was not ducked in some shy water. On the other hand it did not approach his concept of an awesome initiation that a group of quite grubby boys seized him and bore him, frightened but not wholly unwilling, towards an underground lavatory where pallid basins gleamed in the interrupted light. His head was thrust into one of these prosaic basins and water sent unpleasantly down his neck. He was with some solemnity declared then to be fully a member of Transition A, and allowed to proceed to his lunch in the main section of this underground world, where he sat on the water pipes that lined the walls, eating bread and cheese timidly. The air tingled with the bloodthirsty shouts of footballers, violently kicking balls of crushed paper and twine. A lady with tawny hair in a corner of the basement dispensed Jersey caramels to appeased footballers. Indubitably the triumph of the day was the purchase of a cap, green, with blue circular stripes, crested with an eagle invincibly—a cap which proclaimed to the whole abashed world that here was one who was of the world's elect, here was one who was no lesser a mortal than a scholar at Doomington School.

As he walked home that afternoon, he took slow and measured steps, so that none should be denied the privilege of gazing upon his cap. It seemed that less a thing of cloth texture sat on his head than a crest of fire. As he walked along Doomington Road, he paused before each mirrored window as if to tie a shoelace, and actually to compare his eagle, to their enormous disfavour, with all fowls in the lists of fable or biology. But a climax, which seemed on the whole rather to be overdoing it, occurred as he passed below the windows of the factory where his sister Channah was a button-

hole hand. For the shrill bravas of feminine throats attracted his gaze upwards and there he saw and heard the clustered buttonhole hands cheering and waving enthusiastically. And before Philip had time to lower his blushing face a cloud of confetti descended upon this youthful bridegroom of our fair Lady of Wisdom, accentuating his discomfort into an ordeal of shame. At this moment a schoolmate, not much older than Philip, but his faded cap displaying a far more advanced stage of sophistication, passed by, bestowing a sour look upon the object of this public debasement of the masculine values of Doomington School. When he arrived home his mother laid before him a steaming plate of soup which she almost upset in her proud concentration upon the eagle-crested cap.

"And do you know, Mother," Philip declared during his breathless repetition of the day's events, "there was a man there who put us into our classes and he was reading my composition at the scholarship and I thought he was the drilling man but he isn't really, he's the head master, Mr. Furness, and he's like Jupiter, only Jupiter's got a great big black beard and Mr. Furness hasn't and he's not got much on the top of his head either. There's a huge statue of Jupiter . . ."

"To thy soup, Feivel!" said Mrs. Massel, "It will get cold and Mr. Foniss will not come and heat it for thee. Calm then, calm!" she demanded, by no means less aquiver with excitement than the boy.

Yet it must be here said that for some considerable time to come, Doomington School had no serious influence upon Philip's real life. There was of course something *genteel* about the atmosphere compared with the crudities of the Bridgeway Elementary School, and this demanded from Philip a much more rigid discipline in the matter of boots and ties. His master, he was informed,

hailed from an Olympian institution called Oxford University, and for this reason wore a sombre black gown which would have made of a less imposing figure than this gentleman an object to be treated with remote awe. Mr. Mathers was distinguished from Miss Tibbet, at least by the fact that he did not wear tortoise-shell spectacles, and from Miss Briggs of the infants' hall, by the fact that the two front teeth of his top jaw were not disproportionate. Yet Philip felt in his presence a combination of the Briggs terror and the Tibbet ennui. There was in him a monomaniac insistence on the correct orders of Latin sentences which produced the sensation half-way during the lesson that the orders of Latin sentences and the orders of the stars in their courses were of like fundamental gravity. Mr. Mathers presented an interesting contrast to little Mr. Costar who taught French, and who sat in his high desk like a little bird twittering on a bough. Twitter—twitter! the notes came, in a sequence of trills not musical but shrill and frequent. Yet sometimes, and without warning, the tree-top twitter would cease, the eyes of Mr. Costar would become glacially severe, some delinquent would be lifted in his beak like a pink quivering worm, the throat of Mr. Costar would vibrate in the processes of swallowing, and immediately the twitter would be resumed, twitter—twitter, shrill, without humour. The boys seemed no less strange and unreal than Mr. Mathers and Mr. Costar. They came mysteriously from townships scattered round the central and gloomy sun of Doomington, and disappeared with their daily quatum of Latin orders and French verbs into the same dim places, beyond the pale of knowledge. There was a community of Jewish boys at Doomington, but he seemed at once only too familiar with their characteristics. They were a blend of Mottele and Barney,

Mottele being the predominant element. Doomington School lay outside him, poetry lay within. Doomington School did not want him. He would wait. Perhaps he too would some day attain the heavy-browed responsibilities of a form monitor, might be even the monitor elected by the form itself and not the monitor arbitrarily appointed by the master. But now all these concerns were beyond him, unintelligible.

On the other hand, the rearrangement in his daily times produced by the school day was a matter of considerable importance. It meant that he arrived home nearly two hours before the nightly session of *chayder*; with the consequence that Reb Monash was still wrapped in his afternoon doze. Mrs. Massel had by this time cleared away every vestige of the mid-day meal and the kitchen was smelling delightfully fresh and clean. The brasses on the mantelshelf shone broad and lustrous—trays and samovar brought over from Russia, and the array of candlesticks which glorified the table every Sabbath eve. The floor had been energetically scrubbed and the windows so polished as to seduce into the kitchen whatever light lingered beyond the iron bars. On the sofa sat Mrs. Massel herself, in a clean afternoon apron, her fingers busy with knitting, allowing herself in Philip's honour the few minutes she spent idly in a day which began at six in the morning and ended at eleven. Mrs. Massel was a woman of middle age, slim, but her whole body eloquent of hard work. When Reb Monash had gone to seek his rhetorical fortunes in America, before Philip was born, she had tried to combine the housework with some form of itinerant business; the strain was still visible in the long lines across her forehead. Her face was small and wrinkled and superficially older than her actual years. When, however, she smiled, the clouds of her sorrow and

tiredness seemed to chase each other out of the skies of her face. She was then wistful and childish as one to whom the world still had all her tragedies to reveal. Her nose was a little too broad for the small lines of her face, and this only added to her smile an element of the elfin and unreal, as if she had been instructed in some wisdom of dim mirth by little people far beyond the circle of her recurrent drudgeries. This childlike sweetness lay in her eyes even in repose ; for they seemed large and luminous with some inner steady light, they were brown like hill tarns when autumn is on the bracken slopes round them. On her smiling this light seemed to be broken into little ripples which coursed over the brown waters of her eyes ; but a surprise and a doubt at no time deserted them, as if beyond the horizon clouds lay ever waiting to veil these brown lights with mist.

The love between Mrs. Massel and her son was a thing which never or rarely found expression in the usual endearments. It was a love much more of silences than of speech. Philip did not like kissing her, as feeling somehow that the relation between them lay too deep for the lips. It made him self-conscious, and of his love a duty and a convention instead of the sacrament too deep for any deliberate thought. Kissing in Christian families, he learned from books and his meagre experience, was a routine, where every member of the family kissed all others on recognized sections of the face at organized hours. From his mother the endearments he received were a broken word which unwittingly left her lips, a gentle wind-like caress on the head, a goodly something pressed secretly into his hand, or merely a glance from her brown and childish eyes which might rest on his own for two moments, silent with sanctity.

This concealment of their affection had always come naturally to them, though it was found also to be the most

discreet policy. Reb Monash had long discovered that the way to confirm impiety was to cherish the impious. He therefore expected from his wife that at those periods when he was displaying in no mild manner his objection to the latest phase of Philip's heathenism, his wife should loyally and actively second his displeasure. Any manifestation of affection towards Philip at such times caused him with so little restraint to lift his voice that (to the humiliation of his wife) it was obvious that their neighbours on both sides of the house were no less participant of his eloquence than himself.

It was because during a whole hour they could sit and talk without fear, that Philip's return from school now became the brightest period of the day for both. Quite quickly Philip would switch from the day's events to the latest poetry that had fastened on his imagination.

"Mamma," he said, "Listen and be very quiet. I'm going to read you something from Shelley. Oh, it's a lovely thing about a plant in a garden where there was hyacinths and roses like nymphs and about a Lady who came with osier bands and things to hold the flowers up. I say, Mamma, I say!"

"Nu, what is it? Thy meat's not well cooked?"

"No, no! I'm talking about lilies, not meat! I wonder which *you* are!"

"What I am? I am thy mother! What more needest thou?"

"Which are you? Are you the Sensitive Plant or are you the Lady in the garden? When *tatte* starts shouting you look lonely, like the Sensitive Plant, but when he's upstairs you're all lovely like the Lady!"

"Foolishness! Foolishness!"

"But then the Lady died, so it can't be you, can it? And so did the Sensitive Plant, so what are we to do about it?"

"Of course she died ! What then ? And thy mother also, over a hundred years ! She too ! But why must thou talk about Death like this, thou not thirteen yet ? Wait till thou art older and thou hast a wife and family and hast married a son and a daughter, then it will be time ! But for thy Lady, she's only a story, so of course she's dead ! How else ? "

"Ah, that's where you're wrong, see ! Shelley knows all about it. He makes you feel awfully miserable and then he comes back right at the very end :

*That garden sweet, that lady fair,
And all sweet shapes and odours there,
In truth have never past away !
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed ; not they.*

I suppose all that's what Harry means by ' philosophy.' Anyhow, that's not the part I like so much. What d'you think of this ?

*. . . Narcissi, the fairest among them all
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess
Till they die of their own dear loveliness."*

"What does thy mother think of it ? My head's aching ; what can I understand thereof ? "

"Oh yes, you can understand it right enough ! You understand it better than I do, but you don't want to show off ! But listen . . . Oh, where's that Shelley Channah bought me ? Good, here it is ! Listen to this now ! " And he ran through another poem recently discovered. This reading and chanting would take place daily. Mrs. Massel sat on the sofa bewildered by this spate of melody, but keenly happy in the enthusiasm of her son. If she ever ventured a " Philip, but not one word do I understand ! " " Ah ! what does that matter ? "

Philip replied. "Do you remember when I asked *tatte* what good I would do to God by saying a lot of prayers I can't understand a bit about—you remember, he was in a good temper?—he answered that it didn't matter if *you* can't understand; it's so holy to say things in Hebrew that God likes it just the same. Well, there you are, it's just poetry! It's like singing, only much finer!"

Sometimes he would get her to repeat lines after him. She might make a feeble attempt to remonstrate with him, but saw that her humorous efforts made him so beam with delight, that awkwardly, with an entirely false distribution of accents and meanings, she stammered out her lines. It was "Arethusa" finally brought this diversion to an end.

"From her couch of snows," said Philip. She made an effort to imitate him.

"In the Acroceraunian mountains."

"In de Ac—ac—ac . . . It cannot be, Feivel. I can't!"

"In the Ac—ro—ce—rau—nian mountains."

"Ac—roc—Ac—roc—roc—— No, Feivel, my teeth! Tell me all the rest thyself, I will listen; it will be better so! I cannot thy *croc—croc!*"

When at last the feet of Reb Monash were heard in the bedroom overhead, the poetry séance came abruptly to an end. Mrs. Massel turned to the fire to put on the kettle for his pre-*chayder* tea. Philip regretfully hid away his poet and turned to the intricacies of algebra.

Schoolboys have an unerring instinct for the presence or absence of what at Doomington School was called "public spirit." It was in fact so essential a part of the non-material composition of the school that the lists of forms which were drawn up terminally, a little

invidiously distinguished with an asterisk those hearts where "public spirit" was a constant flame.

Philip, though his first year was well advanced, still came to school somewhat as a stranger. While he himself anticipated little the vehement passion which would some day absorb him into the fabric of the school, his form mates anticipated it far less. So that the cold disregard for Philip general in the form was in certain boys concentrated into active persecution, and in Jeremy Higson, into an attitude mournfully reminiscent of the Babylonian *Kossacken*. The spirit was similar but the methods differed vitally. Higson might be standing loosely against a desk when Philip entered the room after the luncheon interval. A nail-studded boot would sweep like Jove's bolt from the void into Philip's rear. But turning towards Higson, Philip would find only a heavy-faced youth talking sleepily with his friends. Higson senior was a mild Episcopalian gentleman who had written sixteen pamphlets to prove the identity of the Anglo-Saxons, including the Higsons senior and junior, with the Lost Tribes. For some perverse reason Higson junior was exceedingly antipathetic to the Found Tribes, when, to be logical, it was for Higson junior to rush forward in consanguineous ecstasy to kiss Philip on the forehead and to repudiate his principal friend, Evan Evans, an indisputable Celt, as an outlander, an unsanctified.

"Where was Moses when the light went out?" he jeered with criminal disrespect. "Who killed Christ?" he insisted frequently, turning towards Philip an eye so baleful that it was evident he considered Philip an actual participant in the crucifixion.

"Out of my way, you *smog*!" he growled, realizing that *smog* was a more acid irritant to Philip than *sheeny*. Yet he discovered and practised a more exquisite in-

fliction. He knew that pig was anathema in Judæa, because Higson senior had once made a pathetic effort to veto this commodity from his household in response to Pentateuchal inhibition, an effort done to nought by the severe displeasure of Mrs. Higson and Higson junior.

Higson junior therefore introduced into the classroom the most succulent morsels from his midday ham sandwiches to devour them in lengthy bliss before Philip's sickened eyes. Philip began to discover little blobs of ham fat in his pockets and school bag. Upon one calamitous day he found as he devoured the first mouthful of his lunch a taste of unutterable impiety in his mouth. Looking with horror into his paper bag he found that its contents had been skilfully tampered with, (he kept his lunch stowed in the pockets of his coat hanging in the basement cloakroom), and that his mouth was now tainted with the abomination of desolation. He withdrew on the wings of disgust and scoured his mouth with water for the remainder of that interval, a process he repeated impetuously during the next few days as often as he recalled the dishonour of his mouth.

"What do you mean by it?" Higson asked Philip one afternoon.

"By what?"

"Killing Christ!"

Philip winced and turned away.

"I say, lads!" Higson said winking. "Let's have a lark with *smoggie*!"

"What's on, Turnips?"

"Let's crucify him!"

A slight gasp of horror rose from the Higson clientèle.

"It's quite easy! Let's first stretch him out on the wall. . . ."

Philip ran to the foot of Mr. Mathers' desk. His desperate eye had caught sight of a large earthenware

bottle of ink. He lifted it and with twitching lips he whispered, "Touch me, that's all!"

"You little squib!" said Higson, swaggering forward nonchalantly. He looked round to his friends.

"Just give me a hand, you fellows!"

"This is your job, Turnips! You bring him to the wall! We'll do the rest!"

"Just you touch me, that's all!" Philip said wildly, his whole body tense against the desk.

"And *what* will you do?"

"I'll throw this in your face! You'll see!"

"Go it, Turnips!" the retinue encouraged. "He's littler than you!"

Higson looked round with a growing expression of despair. It was impossible to withdraw. He moved towards Philip. Philip's arm shot forward. "Oogh—oogh—oogh!" A great volume of muddy ink was streaming down Higson's face and over his light green suit. "Oh, you bloody little devil! Oh, by Christ, I'll show you!"

"No you don't!" a quiet voice said. It was Forrester, the football captain for the form. "You've had your whack! You'd better go and wash before Mathers comes in!"

"Yah!" howled the retinue with swift veer of sails. "Look at Turnips!"

Bullying was one thing, in fact, and dirty blasphemy another, particularly when attended by public ignominy.

Philip, it is true, was not more beloved after this incident than before, but Higson certainly receded into a background of smouldering impotence.

It can readily be seen then that Transition A was not likely to render Philip's old interests less attractive.

A new planet now was beginning to swim into Sewelson's ken. The planet attained soon the fixity of a star.

The star soon almost rivalled the sun of poetry as the prime luminary of Philip's intellectual sky. The name of the new focus was Socialism.

"Don't talk to me about poetry!" Harry declared impatiently one day. "What's the good of poetry while children are starving in garrets? For God's sake keep it in its place, like a lap-dog in a basket. I tell you, Philip, I tell you, there's nothing else but Socialism. Liberals are Conservatives with their hands in somebody else's pockets. Conservatives are Liberals with their hands in their own pockets! Chalk and cheese! We working men have got beyond 'em; we can see 'em through and through. Dead Sea Fruit, that's what they are, all lies and hypocrisy inside, and red smiles outside. What did Churchill promise and how much has he done? No, Philip, a good time's coming! Socialism for ever!"

"But listen, Harry, not so fast! What does it all mean? And why should it knock poetry out like that? There can't be much good in it, if it hasn't got any room for poetry, I don't care what you say!"

Harry glared for a moment. "I didn't say that!" he snapped. "I said it's bigger than poetry! It *is* poetry! How do you like that? Real poetry!"

The relation between the boys at this moment presented in a lively manner their differences and similarities. When any fresh intellectual concept was presented to Philip, he was constitutionally distrustful of it until he had ascertained its position regarding his previous intellectual experience. With an unease which expressed itself in a sort of timid humour, he held back from the idea, fearful of any separative influence upon the current of his emotions. Harry, on the other hand, was borne away completely by any new proposition which made, through material disharmony, towards intellectual harmony. But he was as instinctively afraid of a new

emotional enthusiasm as Philip was hospitable to it, and here he adopted the protective coloration of a humour somewhat lambent and mischievous, to disguise the essentially sluggish setting of his sympathies towards an enlargement of his non-rational existence.

"Well, define it!" challenged Philip. "I know that I don't know anything about it excepting that all sorts of filthy people are called Socialists. People who get full of poetry begin to live a more beautiful life inside. I suppose it ought to be the same with Socialists!"

"Oh, there you are, just as I thought!" exclaimed Harry rather shrilly. "Talking about Socialists, Socialists! What about poets, poets, if it comes to that? You know Shelley was an absolute pig with that girl Harriet and Cowper was mad and Tennyson became a Lord! What on earth's that got to do with poetry! I was talking about Socialism, and I say there's nothing in the world but Socialism! That's what I say! . . ."

"How long have you been like this, Harry? It sounds uncomfortable!"

"Oh, ages!" replied Harry loosely.

"You said nothing about it when I saw you two Saturdays ago. Not that that's got anything to do with it, either! But still, lend a poor chap a hand! Where does it all want to get to?"

"Oh, there's millions of books been written about it. You know *you* couldn't put poetry into a word or two, but it means something like 'Government of the People for the People by the People'—that sort of thing. No millionaires paddling about in fat motor-cars and boys getting consumptive in mines! No plush and palaces for the lords and sweat and a crust for the working people. No rotten old kings on thrones and dying men scrubbing on their knees in workhouses! . . . Oh, don't you see how we want it in Doomington of all

places in the world! *There's* something—what is it you're always gassing about?—which is going to sweep away the muck and the chimneys quicker than mooning about with hollyhocks!"

"Have you got a book about it?" asked Philip uneasily.

"A book? Yes, I *suppose* you'd better have a book to help you along. I've got a fine book all about it, by a chap called Blatchford. *Britain for the British*, that's what it's called! It'll knock you off your feet, first read. Oh damn, I've lent it to Segal! I don't think you've met Segal! No? Oh, he's a clever devil! Yes, I'll get it back from Segal and you can have it."

"Right! I'd like to see what it's all about." -

"Look here! You've done your homework, haven't you? You haven't? Well, *I* haven't, it doesn't matter! There's a Socialist meeting outside Ward's Engineering Works to-night! They're thinking of putting up a Socialist candidate instead of the lousy Liberal. What do you say to coming along just now?"

"I'll never get home in time. The old man's getting a bit radgy again."

"Well, of course, if you're always going to be tied to your father's apron strings. . . ."

"I didn't say I wasn't coming!" Philip broke in hotly.

"Right-ho! We'll go through the back. It's nearer!"

It is almost no exaggeration to say that when Philip came home that night, his head was clamorous with a new gospel, his eyes shone with revelation, his too inflammable nature was ablaze! He walked in unsteadily as if he had been drinking a heady wine. He looked towards his father with a certain pity in his glance. Was he not too a victim of these iniquitous conditions which

the fiery-bearded man had described with such blood-freezing fury? Did Reb Monash know it? Of course he did not know it! "Hapathy!" the man had thundered, "Hapathy! 'Ere is the henemy! Your fathers is strangling their children. What for? Hapathy! Your children is drinking the blood of their fathers! What for? What for, I ask? Hapathy! Deny it who can!"

Reb Monash was engaged in a conversation with a lady who had two sons to dispose into a *chayder*. He thought it discreet for the moment to remain outwardly unaware of the sinful hour Philip had chosen for his return. Open disapproval would have displayed Philip as no satisfactory sample, so to speak, of the paternal wares. He turned to Philip and with a gentle significance the two-sonned lady could not have fathomed, inquired, "Sewelson?"

"No!" replied Philip, "Socialism!"

Reb Monash's lips tightened imperceptibly. He resumed the conversation with his client.

"Of course," declared Philip enthusiastically some time later, "there's absolutely no doubt of it! Shelley was an out-and-out Socialist! As much of a Socialist as that candidate fellow, Dan what's-his-name!"

"You're right! Shelley was all there!" affirmed Harry. He beamed pleasantly upon his convert. "All the decent chaps have been Socialists from the beginning. Christ too, he was no end of a Socialist!"

"Don't know anything about Christ!" said Philip uneasily. There was something disturbing in this treatment of Christ. Christ belonged in the first place to Russia, where they impaled babies in His honour; and then to the Baptist Missionary Chapel, where He was associated with soup and magic lanterns; and to the

Christian prayers at school wherein, of course, Philip had no part.

"Christ was a Jew, after all," Harry put in tentatively, "like Karl Marx."

"Karl Marx?"

"Yes, that's the chap who wrote the big book you were looking at, on the chair near you. I can't say I quite understand it, but they all say you've got to read it, so I got it out of the library."

"Oh that! I don't like that sort of Socialism, it's as bad as Mathers' Latin! I prefer Shelley's. How does it go? Oh yes, don't you think this is fine poetry and fine Socialism, both together in one?"

*Arise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number.
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen upon you.
Ye are many. They are few!*

Isn't it fine?"

"Whist! Yes, that beats the song we sing at the Socialist meetings—all about keeping the red flag flying, eh? It leaves old man Tennyson a bit husky, what do you think?"

"Steady dog, isn't he, Tennyson? Wants to take his time about it. Doesn't he say something like

*Freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent. . . . ?*

Doesn't that mean you've got to take things sort of quietly?"

". . . While mothers haven't got any milk for their kids and Doomington stinks with corpses! By God! It makes me sick! But there's no point rubbing

it into you, you dark horse. You've been a Socialist for the last—how many—fourteen years? But listen, I've not told you? Dan Jamieson wants me to get on my hind legs and say a few words at one of his meetings. What do you say to that?"

"I'd be frightened out of my life. But how does he know you'll not make a muck of it?"

"That's what I wanted to know. But he said he overheard me barging at a lot of kids at a street corner, and he said to himself, 'that's the goods for me,' he said."

"Gee! You'll start crying in the middle!"

"Don't be so sure! It matters too much for me to start howling like a kid. I'm as good as that weedy fellow with no chin at the Liberal meeting yesterday, any time of the year!"

"What are you going to talk about? Will you spit out this here Marx of yours?"

"I saw Jamieson on Tuesday and asked him what he wanted. 'Never tha mind, lad!' he said, 'it'll serve our purpose seeing a lad like thee get oop on's feet. That'll fetch 'em. Doan't think in advance about it. Just oppen tha lips and t'rest'll coom.' That's the way he went on. It *does* make me feel rather goosy sometimes," Harry admitted, "but I've got hopes in that line, so all I can say is I ought to be damn glad of the chance!"

"Well, you're a game 'un, anyhow. I shouldn't like to be in your shoes."

"You never know, my lad, you never know!" Harry speculated with dubious prophecy.

Again some time has passed. Reb Monash sits upright upon that corner chair wherein none shall sit whether Reb Monash be asleep upstairs or at the fur-

thest limit of his peregrinations—because “Respect! respect!” he declares, “What means it to be sitting on a father’s chair!” He is sitting upright and his left fist clenched angrily beats the table before him in punctuation of his utterances.

“Has one ever heard of such a thing? A *yungatsch* of fifteen, not more, to stand up in the market-place with the enemies of Israel and talk black things! That’s what it means, your schools and your teachers! His parent, what is he? An *isvostchik*! I never had any trust in these Rumanians. The town rings with it. Imagine! standing up on a cart among the Atheists and Free-Lovers and Socialists! It’s a *shkandal*. It will bring his mother’s grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. Sooner my son should in the grave himself be than behave like that proselytized Sewelson. Understand, not a word, Feivel! Thou must never put foot into the heathen’s house! I forbid it! I have had my doubts for long. Would that I had so commanded before this day. God knows what poison thou canst have drunk from his lips. What, what sayest thou, Philip?”

“*Tatte*, I can’t, he’s my only pal! I’ll be alone without him. And he doesn’t do it every week, anyhow. It’s only this once!”

“Never must he enter this house! And if thou art ever seen with him, I will break for thee thy bones, all of them. No more now!” He brought the palm of his hand down emphatically. “Chayah, bring me a glass of tea! Tell thy son to go to bed! If not it will be the worse for him!”

Philip’s heart shook with resentment and grief. “I won’t give him up,” he muttered fiercely behind his teeth. “He won’t stop me! He can’t! I’ll be damned if I give him up! He’ll see!”

Heavy wings were brooding over the kitchen in Angel Street. The gas jet drooped dejectedly as if reluctant to light up the scared faces of Mrs. Massel and her daughter. They sat side by side on the sofa nervously rubbing together the palms of their hands. The thin white cat scratched his ribs against their ankles and howled into their faces inquiringly.

"Never mind," said Channah, "perhaps he'll just give him a good hiding and send him off without supper. It's happened before, mother. Don't look so worried!"

"Thou dost not know, Channah, what he's been saying to me in bed the last few nights. He said if he'll go again with Sewelson he'll *shmeis* him till he begs for mercy. He said he'll keep him in the cellar all night, he'll *shmeis* him till he can't even cry. Oh, what a year has fallen upon us, Channah!"

"I hate Sewelson, it's all his fault! I wish he was at the bottom of the sea!" Channah burst out bitterly.

"But it was wrong of Feivel. It was wrong to go out with Sewelson again. I told him. He deserves it. But no, the poor dove, not . . ."

"Not what he'll get. Do you know who it was told father he was talking to Sewelson? Oh, the sneak—I could murder him!"

"I don't know! I don't know! It was one of the *chayder* boys, I think. But hush, here come they! Don't say a word to him, Channah, or he'll turn round on me and keep on shouting in bed all night! Oi, look at the child!"

Reb Monash entered the room, his face bloodless with anger and cold determination. Philip followed behind, his hands sunk in his pockets, his chin on his breast. Reb Monash took from the pocket of his alpaca coat a long thin strip of black hide. He sat down on a chair,

and without looking towards Philip, commanded "Thy trousers down!" Philip obeyed.

"Now I will teach thee whether thou wilt mix with all the filth in the land. Over my knees!"

The venomous strap descended, twice, three times, four times. A swift catch came from Philip's throat. Again and once again. Her whole body shuddering dismally, Mrs. Massel stole from the room. From the scullery came Channah's voice, moaning. Again the strap came down. A thin cry of pain shrilled through Philip's teeth.

"And wilt thou again go with Sewelson?"

No answer.

"And wilt thou again go with Sewelson. Say no!"

"I will! I will!"

"Well, we will see who will prevail. Say no!"

"I will!"

"I am stronger than thou. Say no!"

For answer Philip's body rolled slackly from his father's knees.

"No, my son, no! It is not yet finished. Wilt thou say no? One word, no!"

The strap whistled through the air. Remotely, brokenly, Philip's voice came from far off.

"No!"

"That is as I thought! Thou wilt bless me some time with tears in thine eyes for what has been done to-night. Thy mother can give thee supper if she will, I do not forbid."

But the crushed figure of Philip had writhed from the room. Soon he was lying on his bed, limp, not daring to stir because each movement stabbed him acutely. He buried his face in the pillow. He could not think. He could not remember. He knew only that he was a mass of intolerable pain. Yet he knew that something hurt

him even more than his pain. He had forsworn himself. He had lost something. All life was a fight, was a movement forward, away from the darkness into the places of light. He had forsworn himself. He had fallen back into Babylon. The dark was closing round him and the pitchy waters were gurgling in his throat.

There was a whisper beside him.

"Philip, Philip, it's Channah!"

Who was Channah? A girl, a sister. She had a rolled gold brooch with two holes where diamonds should have been. One of her boots was very worn at the heel.

"Go away, go away! I don't want you!"

"Philip, poor old kid, I'm so sorry! Mother's crying her heart out! Listen, Philip! Mother sent me up with a cup of milk and some cake!"

How the pain licked round him, like flames. Sewelson was a fine chap, anyhow. God, what a wonderful speech he had made that night! When he came down his face was pouring with sweat. Somebody threw a brick at him. . . .

"Philip, well?"

"Oh, go away, go away! I don't want anything! Leave me alone!"

"I'm leaving the milk and the cake on the chair by your bed, see? Good night, kid! Drink up and try and go to sleep!"

Dimly he heard the sound of his father and mother entering their bedroom. Then a long monologue followed. It was very loud, but his ears were sealed against it. Pitch blackness was all round him, and something had made a breach in the walls of his soul and the pitch blackness was flooding through. Would they all be drowned, Sewelson and Shelley and the big bluff face of Dan Jamieson? He had forsworn Shelley. The image of Shelley's body tossing forlornly on the waters of

Spezzia reproached him. Why had Shelley died if Philip Massel were to forget him, leave him tossing endlessly on the grey seas? A melancholy cat gibbered beyond the window, down in the yard. Wearily, wearily, the hours passed. He could not tolerate it. With his guilt keeping his shoulders below the waters he would never breathe clean airs again, he would never fall asleep, never awake.

What could he do? He must gainsay his disloyalty! There was nothing for it. Thus only would the forward march from Babylon be resumed. What? What? He started from his bed! Repudiate his treachery before the man in whose pocket lay dreadfully coiled the black snake? There was nothing, nothing but this! Else all liberty was vain, poetry was vain. Poetry was a plaything, not the incense in the House of the Lord. A clock in a church steeple tolled once, twice. The night was passing; the dawn would come. He would find his soul lost with the dawn. Nothing of glamour or struggle would be left for him.

Yet what could he do? Renounce his renunciation? Nothing less, nothing else! Vividly each stroke of the strap was reiterated in his memory. Was liberty worth it, was poetry? He remembered Harry's bleeding forehead where the lout had thrown the brick. He imagined the floating, sodden hair of Shelley adrift on the indifferent waters.

He rose from his bed. It felt as if he were tearing his body into strips. Every bone ached, every muscle was raw. He opened his door and crept down the stairs till he stood outside his father's bedroom. He knocked. His father had at last fallen asleep. The monologue for that night was ended at last. There was no reply. He knocked again. A sudden and tremendous panic seized him. What a fool he was! What was he doing it all

for? Why shouldn't he settle down and be what his father wanted him to be and what the masters at school wanted him to be. It was the easier way. How easy it would be to gain the applause of the Polish Synagogue, the applause of Doomington School! On the other side, what? Poetry, Shelley! A swift agony of pain as he moved recalled him to his determination. Forward, forward! He knocked a third time, more loudly.

"*Yah, yah!*" came the startled, sleepy voice of Reb Monash. "Who is it? What is it?"

Philip opened the door.

"It's me!"

"What hast thou come about?"

"I've come about Sewelson. I said I won't go out again with Sewelson . . ." There was a pause. The boy heard his heart drumming across the night. Then followed—"Well—I will!"

He heard a gasp from the bed.

"Gott!"

Silence, complete silence.

Philip closed the door and crept upstairs again. The pain of his lacerated flesh was somehow easier to bear. A faint finger of moonlight pointed ghostlily into the room as he entered. He made out vaguely the milk and cake his mother had sent up for him. He discovered he was ravenously hungry and devoured the food. He took his clothes off and with great caution hunched himself between the blankets. The moonlight washed over his face and showed him sound asleep.

The truce was over. During Philip's first year at school it had already worn a little thin. The emotion of pride with which Reb Monash had seen his son enrolled among the scholars of Doomington School was now considerably reduced. Philip's second year at

school seemed by no means likely to bear out his father's prognostications that the study of Gentile lore would so work upon his stubborn brain as to turn him with warmth towards the *Yidishkeit* of home and synagogue. *Chayder* was now out of the question. It was easy enough for Philip to plead home-work when a tentative invitation in that direction was held out, and he was now nearly fourteen years old, too fully fledged for the compass of *chayder's* wing.

Yet Reb Monash was certainly going to see that the boy's other duties were not neglected—his washings before food, his three several bodies of prayer at morning, noon and night, his rigid application to the matutinal phylacteries, his countless other duties. In the degree that Philip's enthusiasm for that whole aspect of his existence symbolized by his phylacteries flagged, a process considerably accelerated by the distintegrative tide of Socialism, Reb Monash himself determined that his son's feet should be held forcefully upon the precise road. He frequently threatened a visit to Mr. Furness, an issue to which Philip could not help looking forward with both pleasure and apprehension. Philip had come into contact with the Head Master on very few occasions, during one of which he was soundly snubbed for an effort to display to Mr. Furness how much more intimate was his knowledge of Shelley's philosophy than Mr. Furness'. Yet he felt that there was a faculty in Mr. Furness for seeing with those deep-set stone-blue eyes so deeply into a proposition that the difficult nature of his case would be manifest to him. He felt at the same time a little discomfort at the thought that the distinctly mediocre position he occupied in the fortnightly form lists might attain a prominence he did not desire. But, he reassured himself, there was always time to pick up in that line, when he felt like

it ; in the meanwhile his friendship with Sewelson was far more absorbing, particularly when it now became an occupation which involved a savour of the perils incident to big game hunting. In short, whenever the opportunity presented itself, he was in Sewelson's company, and whenever Reb Monash discovered the fact he received the punishment he risked.

Dan Jamieson had received a paltry hundred and thirty-five votes at the General Election. But he had brought a blush of intense pleasure and pride to Harry's cheeks by assuring him that to Harry he owed the odd thirty-five.

"The foäk canna stand oop agin a babe!" he declared. Philip was standing by at the time, shyly enough, and Jamieson added kindly, "and I expect another thirty-five voäts from thee, lad, next time we sets ball rollin'!"

Harry refused to let his friend forget the thirty-five votes which were due from him to the Socialist cause. "It's not enough for you," he insisted, "to talk to the chaps at the dinner hour. That's an average of a man a month. I know. I've been doing it. You'll have to get up and spout!"

"Don't be a fool, Harry! You know it's not my line! I'm not old enough, anyhow!"

"Fiddle! What about me?"

Philip's career as an orator began with a question he tried to ask at a Conservative meeting, with a mouth which felt as if it were dilated with an india-rubber ball. No one took the least notice. After many minutes his blush of discomfort faded away, but he swore fervently that he wasn't going to be such a blithering idiot next time. Some days later, when the tide of a Liberal orator's eloquence seemed to be momentarily checked, he burst in shrilly with a long premeditated question, "But

what's the good of trying to patch the roof when the foundations are rotten ? " The orator closed his mouth with a spasm of fright. A number of heavy democrats in the crowd said genially, " Good for you, sonny ! That's stumped him ! Yes, what d'you say to that ? " they shouted to the orator, " What's the good of trying to patch the roof when the foundations are rotten ? "

" My concern is not with children," said the orator unhappily, " I'm after the vote, the men with the vote. I leave it to the other parties to canvass the children ! "

" Down with him, down with him ! " a woman shrieked excitedly. " He wants to starve the kids ! "

" Where's the young 'un ? Give him a chance ! "

But Philip had withdrawn, having tasted blood. A sweet music was jingling in his ears. He had heard his own voice lifted in the presence of a crowd and the crowd had responded generously. He abandoned momentarily his ambition to become Poet Laureate and determined to shape his course towards the Premiership of the United Kingdom.

Now and again during this period Philip went to have a few words with an old Bridgeway School friend of his who worked in one of the coat and mantle factories bordering the Mitchen. It was an experience which lifted his Socialism from a theory and a somewhat sentimental abstraction to a clamant and immediate need. " Sweated labour " became a phrase which he could endow with the actual physical associations it was intended to conjure. He saw the men in their filthy shirts spitting upon their pressing-irons and the floor indiscriminately. Their sweat fell unregarded on the material below them. The tailors sitting about on the littered tables seemed to be more perversions of men, grotesques, than men actually. The windows were fouled with an opaque mist of dirt and sweat. Little boys shuffled

uneasily about like subterranean gnomes. Girls cackled hideously after him, and when the men started an obscene catch which lifted his gorge, girl after girl in the adjoining rooms accepted the sexual challenge and cackled in return. He saw a thick-nosed foreman whose waistcoat glimmered evilly with countless soup droppings fuddling his fingers in the bosom of a girl. He saw another girl, a recent recruit, leaning, ivory-yellow, through a window which looked down on the Mitchen slime. There was no reason why her body should not follow where her eyes looked down so stupidly. What else was there? Nothing but the reeking room and the dirty songs and the swinish waistcoat of the foreman! The picture of this sick girl remained abidingly with him. When Harry turned suddenly to him one evening and announced that he had given Philip's name to the Longton secretary as a speaker for next Sunday evening, at the very moment of dismay and revolt her image came back to him and filled him with a blind fury against the ordinances of men.

"All right, I'll come!" he said thickly. "You know I'll make a filthy mess of it, but that's your fault. I've got nothing to say and I don't know how to say it and I'll just get up and open my mouth and shut it and fall off. Good God, Harry Sewelson, you're a pig!"

"And you're a good Socialist! There's two first-rate lies. It's on the croft outside Longton Park. But don't worry, Philip, old man, you've got the stuff, never fear! Sunday, May the something-or-other, is the date. Anyhow, that doesn't matter, it's next Sunday, at half-past six! So that's all right!"

Philip carefully prepared a little speech. He repeated it several times before his mother, assuring her that it was one of Antony's many orations over the corpse of Cæsar. So long as Philip did not declaim loud enough.

to wake Reb Monash she was happy enough to listen obediently to Antony's denunciation of the House of Lords.

Next Sunday Philip turned up and sat below the oratorial cart biting his nails nervously and recapitulating his speech. He was called upon immediately after an emancipated coal-heaver, whose jocosity had tickled the crowd into unrest.

When Philip rose blinking and with a heart full of the most unmitigated hatred for Harry, a gentleman adorned with a muffler and a slant Tweed hat exclaimed ribaldly, "Crikey! Look what's come! Johnny, go back to your mummy's titty-bottle!"

There was a prompt evanescence from Philip's brain of his carefully prepared speech. He was at that stage of nervousness which endows its victims with a degree of courage no ordinary frame of mind could conceivably induce. He turned fiercely towards the humorous gentleman and forgetting completely his brothers in the cause who were round him on the cart, forgetting the upturned, sceptical faces of his audience, he vented upon the humorous gentleman so turbid a stream of denunciation, dazzled his head with such a storm of rapiers furnished as much from his own shrill temper as from the prose of Blatchford and the poetry of Shelley, convinced him so thoroughly that both the continuance of the House of Lords along its bloody path of rapacity and the putrefaction of the factories along the Mitchen River were due to his criminal indifference and abysmal stupidity, that the humorous gentleman straightened his Tweed hat, tied his muffler into a different knot, buttoned all the buttons in his jacket, in the vain effort to present as different an appearance as possible from the humorist who had twitted the firebrand on his first appearance upon the platform.

Philip was sweating and shivering when he descended ; he was, moreover, consumed with a secret dread lest the object of his denunciations should wait for him in a dark corner to conclude the episode in Philip's disfavour. The Longton secretary shook Philip's hand respectfully as if the limb were made of a clay slightly superior to his own. He checked himself when he found he was addressing Philip as " sir " and substituted " comrade." And Philip, when he descended the Blenheim Road, found himself booked to speak at a meeting on the Longton croft some time ahead.

Philip instinctively realized that whatever the future held in store for him as a speaker (but, to be candid, the glories of the Premiership seemed speedily to dissipate), his talent lay rather in the field of inspiration than of discipline. He knew (and this confirmed his orientation towards the Laureateship) that he would invariably be a catspaw of circumstances either for success or failure, as soon as he had laid aside the pen for the tongue. For this reason he deliberately withheld from the *Book of Pros and Cons for Debating Societies* out of which, as his friend confessed, Harry made golden capital. As he sat again below the cart on the evening of his second public appearance, he made a strenuous effort to keep his mind as blank as possible. Overhead his precedent orator was thundering. The sanguine hues of his bellying and flamboyant tie had already won for him half his battle. Who could impeach the politics of a man whose neckwear flung a defiance in the teeth of sunset and whose eloquence paled both ? With a consistent massacre of aitches he triumphed across the turbulent field, until at last, when he ended with " and your children will get down on their knees and praise God that their parents took the right path ! ", the crowd generally, and Philip in particular, were swept

high and dry upon the beach of enthusiasm by the wave of the man's argument.

It was impossible to be self-conscious at such a moment. Philip sprang valiantly on to the cart and with tremendous effect his treble, like woodwind ardently repeating the theme of brass, reiterated "and your children will get down on their knees and praise God that their parents took the right path!"

There was no holding him back. Repeatedly he brought his left fist upon the palm of his right hand to clinch his indisputable conclusions. The other speakers on the platform were shocked out of mere admiration into submission to his cogency. Harry could hardly realize that this was the hesitant young friend who followed his lead with such blundering perseverance, and who was, when you came to think of it, rather a muff on the whole. It was a stranger, small, ungainly, irresistible. The crowd below stared, their mouths gaping, their heads swaying slightly to the rhythm of his gestures.

It was an incoherent enough medley, and perhaps the precocity of the youth was more exhibited in the uncanny earnestness of his manner than in the intellectual quality of the stuff he uttered. The crowd he was addressing consisted of serious artisans, night-school-educated clerks, filmy half-existent women, whose mental development at fifty would in all likelihood not transcend Harry's at fifteen, to whom they listened indeed, not because they were interested in his crystal arguments, but because his wit, his adroitness, pleased them like the froth on their evening pints. They were therefore an easier prey to Philip's uncouth flood of undigested emotions. He attempted, as often as he remembered this episode, to reconstruct his speech, to examine what potent eloquence had carried himself

away even more completely than the crowd. He only remembered the moment when he returned to the concluding remark of the last speaker. "Our fathers," he began, "our fathers have tried . . . I say, our fathers . . . our fathers . . ."

The crowd breathed anxiously. What was happening to the young feller? Had he seen a ghost, he was that pale? He'd been as red as a turkey cock only just now, he had! There weren't no stopping him a minute ago, and now the words were sticking in the back of his throat. It was a shame, it was! It was too much to expect of a kid! Just like these Socialist fellers to put it across a kid once they got hold of him! Couldn't be more than fifteen, or sixteen at the most, he couldn't! It wasn't good enough, don't care what you say! He'd faint if they wasn't careful. . . .

But look, he was starting again.

"Our fathers have tried for all they are worth. Your fathers and mine have tried . . ." The lad's eyes were starting from his head. He gulped and started again, "Have tried, I say . . ."

It was as if some spell of physical evocation resided in his words. Whilst his lips were still shaping the first vowel of "fathers," something black and aloof and ominous had drifted from the vague towards the limit of his audience. A tall shining silk hat, familiar symbol of repressions and disaster, threw a deep gloom over against his eyes.

"Our fathers have tried . . ."

But his own father was here, whose love for him was like hate, and whose hate pierced at once his son's heart and his own. What should he do? It was he, of course it was he! Whose else could those mournful and hostile eyes be, their orbs large with a stricken indignation? There passed across the fringe of his stupor a

recollection like the vague white wing of an owl at dayfall. Hadn't his father said something about going to see Dorah up in Longton this evening? Why had he not taken warning and kept away? His father must have noticed from the road some hundred yards away the gathering on the croft against the railings of Longton Park. He must then have determined to go home through the croft instead of down the straight Blenheim Road, so to discover whether the proselytized one, the forbidden Harry Sewelson, was uttering his nefarious doctrine here, with Philip, perhaps, at his feet. And here he stood, his brow contracted with pent fury, biting his upper lip! With what dexterity of the sloping brush had he stroked the silky fibre of his hat to-day! How white, deathly white, was the white bow on his stiff white front! There were signs of white in his black beard. He was getting old, old. His eyes blazed. Old? He was young, proud, strong—younger than his son, young as his race, the eternal child, the stubborn stripling that would not change nor grow though God were visible, though the hills melted, though the stars cried across the void "Lo! you must change or you shall die!"

In this moment with tense clarity an alternative presented itself before Philip's swooning eyes. He might withdraw; he had carried them with him so clearly that they would let him go with but a sympathetic murmur if he stammered out that he was unwell. He could withdraw with grace, and at the same time go to meet the inevitable trouble half-way. There discretion pointed. He must decide at once.

Or else, or else he could set the seal on his victories. He would not have uttered that dismal shout in school vainly, he would not have recanted vainly upon that strange dim night. He would, seeking for courage in

the very depth of his spirit, in the very height of this sky where his father and he stood face to face, while Doomington waited, and his race waited, he would gather together once more the reins of his daring. Who should withstand his horses? Who should gainsay the thunder of their nostrils and the death in their feet! Was it his own battle alone that awaited decision? Himself, he existed no more! The unborn brothers of his race, the unborn children of his country, lifted towards him their ghostly hands. Do not desert us, they said, for in a boy's hand lies the issue, and God is silent, waiting that a boy should speak. A boy was he? A boy? He was a man amongst the men of eld! Isaiah was by his side! Dimly the exquisite voice of Shelley said to him, "Do not despair!"

What if it should break him, what if it meant he could never lift his voice again? Yet his voice though silent, his voice though a frail boy's, should be voluminous on the winds of the world, and if his body were cast aside, his heart's blood would be red energy in the hearts of the cohorts of Joy.

His figure suddenly, with the automatic gesture of the marionette, straightened itself. With something of defiance he flung his chest forward and clenched both his fists. A wave of swift colour flushed into his cheeks and as swiftly withdrew. He was speaking once more.

The passion that moved the lad now was too swift merely for swift diction. He spoke evenly, his voice was almost a whisper. The black-bearded man who had stood for some moments on the edge of the crowd, disappeared. No one noticed him. At last Philip dropped loosely into the chair behind him on the cart.

For an hour or two that evening hardly a man moved

from the gathering in front of the railings of the Longton Park.

"Come to our house and have some grub!" said Harry apprehensively to Philip, who leaned against the railings, ashen-pale.

Philip turned away wearily. "Go away, Harry, I'm done!" He walked home very slowly, carefully avoiding the lines between the pavement slabs. He trod on the foot of a dignitary from the *Polisher Shool*, who swore at him and spat into the street.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN the storm had subsided, Philip felt like a sea-battered hulk, shorn of spars, incompetent to face wind and tide. The muscle of his left arm suffered peculiarly. Really, the way it had been wrenched and bruised was almost comical. As if his arm had espoused Blatchford and orated on the waste croft which his father had so persistently misnamed the "Public ways and the market-places." Poor old muscle ! He dropped his forearm tenderly to see if the movement did not circle the upper arm with bracelets of fire. He took his shirt off and licked the coloured wound with his tongue, like an animal released from a trap. He stared into a jagged fragment of mirror, and seeing his face so grey and drawn burst unaccountably into a roar of laughter. He drowned the noise at once by biting his lip fiercely. "The Romance of a Brachial Muscle !" What a fine subject for a long narrative poem in countless cantos ! Oh, by God, he was miserable ! What was wrong with Life ? Why were Life and he always at daggers drawn ? He recapitulated the sum of his conscious crimes. He had once stolen carrots from the cellar, it was true ! But equipoise had been asserted : he had been rewarded by an ample stomach-ache. And finally, when physical calm had been established, to round off his state with spiritual calm, he had bought two penn'orth of carrots and replaced them in the cellar. Also, he was bound to confess, he invariably kept his

book open in school during the reciting of prepared passages. But then the boy behind him used his own collar as he himself used the collar of the boy in front. It wasn't really cheating because Gibson was such an ass in so many ways! Anyhow there was no doubt the world hated him. The world had always hated him. He had never got on with anybody in Angel Street. He had a filthy time at school, and then there was all this business, and oh, hell! what a rotten arm he had!

He had determined against committing suicide. He remembered once saying to his mother after a row, saying with a strange mordant humour, "Mother, I think it'll be happier for the whole family if I commit suicide!"

"If thou what? Speak plain!"

"Kill myself! Throw myself in the river!"

She had made no reply. She merely went to the sofa and sat trembling for a few minutes. She said "Feivel!" once, less with reproach than raw, ugly pain. All that day she did her housework unsteadily and said not a word to Philip. He hadn't liked it. No, it was better not to commit suicide. It savoured too imitatively, moreover, of the *Mighty Atom*, whom he had disliked. Then, in addition, the wife of somebody the watchmaker had recently tried it and succeeded. She obviously could have reaped no satisfaction from the episode. If only he could die accidentally! Would even that make his father sorry for his abominable treatment? The youthful corpse would lie on the parlour floor under a black cloth and everybody would sympathize frightfully with his mother and be pointedly chilly towards Reb Monash. Wouldn't he be sick about it! Wouldn't he ask God for another chance to behave like a decent sort of

father, but all to no use! There would be his son's pale and romantic corpse lying stately beneath the cloth, with candles and things about. "Easeful Death," one of the poets said somewhere. That wasn't half strong enough. It was a triumph, a pageant! But it meant being carted off, didn't it, to the cold ground somewhere, and the weepers would go away and the candles be extinguished, and the rain would come down, and the coffin be sodden and fall away! That was where the worm-element came in, and with the worm-element he could pretend no sympathy; "where the worm became top-dog," as he had once brilliantly said in comment upon "And the play is the Tragedy, Man—the hero, the Conqueror—Worm!"

It was at this moment that the idea of running away occurred to him. He had lately been reading the triumphant career of a runner-away. Harry had once recommended running away, sceptically enough, but it would be tremendously interesting to take his casual advice seriously. He was quite definitely conscious how melodramatic the idea was, and just as conscious that he had already decided on its execution. The fellow in the book had performed no end of valiant deeds in fires, shipwrecks and revolutions. It was a thin book, duller even than Mr. Henty, whom he had long ago discarded. Of course, he was not going to be taken in by that sort of thing, but any proposal was more satisfactory than the shoutings and the bruised arms of which his life now was constituted.

It was settled! He was going to run away! When? Obviously now, at once! There was no point in to-morrow. To-morrow would be like yesterday. It was evening now. He'd set out and by the time night came . . . Oh, there wasn't any need to worry about it! Something would happen. Something always happened,

Yet everything was rather frighteningly vague. Was there any need to carry anything off with him? Doubtless it would be more independent and proud to go just as he was, and he wouldn't need an overcoat for months. Oh yes, he might as well stick that Shelley in his pocket. He *would* finish the "Revolt of Islam," though he had tried three times already. He lifted his injured arm to reach the book and dropped it again, wincing. He sat down before his rickety table, and wrote a brief note to his mother, slipped it into an envelope and descended into the kitchen. He looked mournfully and significantly upon his mother, murmuring to himself bitterly, "If she only knew!" He felt a disgraceful impulse to utter a loud howl of remorse, but manfully repressed it and, realizing that each moment in the kitchen endangered his resolution, went to the door. As he closed the door behind him, he dropped the envelope through.

He carefully examined his feelings. He was running away, wasn't he? It was the most dramatic moment in all his life. There had been psychological crises before, but here was something palpable, dramatic. He was putting himself into immediate communion with some of the choicest spirits of history or legend. Not many other chaps dared do this sort of thing. Then why on earth wasn't he more excited about it? His heart ought to be storming valiantly, but its workings seemed to respect their usual method and speed. He only felt a little dazed and stupid. He was under the ridiculous impression he was only acting! That was absurd, at such a crisis! The vague, the vast, into which he was adventuring, were not merely uninviting, they were, in some inexplicable fashion, not even there. Home and his father and his mother and his arm, all these were realities enough, and the only realities. But this running

away, upon which at this very moment he was actually embarked, was a thin dream. And here was another reality, here was Channah coming down the street.

"Good-bye, Channah!" he said darkly.

"You're not off to a meeting?" she ventured confidently.

"Oh no! Oh no!" he replied gloomily. She walked on. It was necessary to be moving. She would probably find the note and the finding would lead to immediate results. He ran along into Doomington Road, and almost mechanically turned up into Blenheim Road. They'd not know which way he was going, he needn't fear that. He slowed down and sauntered along. Where the devil should he go now? that question ought to be decided. His mind was torpid. No sooner was the question formulated than it passed from his mind. Somebody was gesticulating to a crowd on the croft. Aimlessly he turned in that direction. They were talking about Tariff Reform, statistics, Poor Laws, molasses and things. He lacked the resolution to go further, so he stood, neither listening nor thinking, just dull, dimly unhappy.

He felt an arm slip round his neck. An anguished voice said, "Philip, don't be such a donkey! Mother's half-mad with worry, you *meshugener*! Is this your idea of a joke, you little fool?"

Channah must have realized which way his steps would instinctively turn.

Philip threw the arm off and turned to a dishevelled Channah. "I'm not a fool! I'm dead sick of him and 'm going to get out of it!"

"Where?" she asked.

"Anywhere!" he exclaimed desperately.

"Come on now, there's a good lad!" She got hold

of his arm. "He'll not know anything about it if you come at once!"

"I want him to know! Let go! Oh, you wont, wont you? There!" He wrenched his arm free. He fled along the croft and found his sister following in forlorn pursuit. When he had put a safe distance between them he turned round. Channah was standing, wringing her hands, and her hair, escaped from her combs and pins, flew about her head. It made him feel an unutterable scoundrel. He knew that he was acting like a fool and a blackguard! "Come home, Philip, oh, *do* come home!" her voice shrilled.

But he couldn't. He had a little dignity after all. He was getting on in life and it was about time he could think out and pursue his own plan of campaign.

"I can't!" he said. "Give Mother my love! Good-bye! Tell her it's not my fault!" he insisted anxiously. "Good-bye!"

He followed up the road and left Channah standing blankly. Definitely he was running away. An almost complete numbness now gripped his brain. He had a faint idea of getting out into the country but he found himself penetrating deeper and deeper into the town. Night was gathering thickly over Doomington. He felt too stupid even to be aware of his hunger. For hours and hours, it seemed, he walked through the dark streets. Indifferent people jostled him into the roadway. Every now and again he found his journeying had brought him before the same ugly squat little church. He must get out of this. He turned off in a direction he was certain he had not pursued before. He found himself in a murky hidden square, with feet heavy as blocks of stone. Blocks of stone seemed to be tugging his eyelids down to close over his eyes. He was suddenly aware of a tremendous need of sleep. There was a form

in the flagged path which led through the square. A man and a woman were sitting very close together on it ; but there was room for him. He threw himself down and his head fell immediately upon his chest. He plunged at once into a tired sleep. When he awoke, it was very dark and quiet. He remembered that there had been a man and a woman beside him, but they had moved away ! What was it he was doing here ? Of course, he'd run away ! What a thick heavy business it was, running away ! How many hours ago was it since he had started ? Nothing had happened yet. Nothing. He just felt foolish and extremely miserable. Well, he must keep going till something did happen. As he rose, he heard the bell in the steeple over him toll hollowly. One o'clock ! Oh, the desolate hour ! Somewhere deep in Doomington, alone, hungry, tired, at one o'clock ! He shuffled wearily from the square and up through one or two towering and narrow streets. He heard a man prowling about in a doorway. His heart stood still with terror. Steps came forward and a lantern surrounded him with ghostly light. A policeman peered suspiciously into his face and lumbered on. Here was a main road. How wide and lonely and terrible it was ! He dared not stand still, the policeman would come after him and ask questions which he would not be able to answer. He must keep moving, moving, God knew where, but moving. His feet made an alarming sound on the deserted pavements. Oh, *what* was he doing here ? Why hadn't he waited till he got some money from somewhere, somehow, before he ran away ? How formidably the doorways were barred against him ! The plate-glass windows stared leering with baleful eyes. Some one had moved from a side street into the main road and was coming towards him. A lady it was. A real lady too, she seemed, as she came nearer and he

saw the opulent nature of her clothing. Her skirts swished richly. There was a feather bobbing over the side of her hat. Channah had only one feather which she kept securely from year to year, dyeing it occasionally. There were three feathers in the lady's hat. What was she doing out just now? She couldn't possibly be running away, like himself. She was rather fat, she ought to be quite a decent sort. She introduced a sense of companionship into the appalling void of night. Joy! She had stopped and was talking to him!

"Well, cockie!" she said, "it's rather late for a little 'un!"

"Yes, ma'am!" he said respectfully.

"Haven't you got a home? You look all right, your clothes and that!"

"Yes, I have got a home!"

"'Xcuse my asking like, but why aren't you in it? It's gone two, you know!"

"Well, because . . . it's because . . . I . . . I mean, he . . ."

"Oh, I understand, cockie!" she said kindly. "He's been and gone and chucked you out like, eh?"

"He *hasn't* chucked me out!" declared Philip hotly. "I've chucked myself out. I've run away from home!"

"Phew!" she whistled. "That's the ticket, eh? You're a plucked 'un! But what are you going to do now?"

"I don't know. Just walk, I suppose. I'll see!"

"I like you, sonnie, I like your voice. Let's keep on, it'll never do to stand in one place, they don't like it. Just come to the lamp there. I'd like to look at you!"

He found that a large, warm, somewhat flabby hand

had taken his own. They walked together to a lamp. His friend got hold of his forehead with one hand and his chin with the other, and exposed his face to the falling lamplight. He caught a glimpse of the lady's face above the heavy chain of rolled gold that lay on her bosom. Her face was pallid round the fringes of the cheeks and on the tip of her nose, and by contrast, her cheeks were singularly red. Her lips too were red, quite unlike the red of Channah's lips and his mother's. It was a sleepy, fat face, rather kindly. There was something strange about her eyes, something like—well, funny eyes, anyhow! Hungry eyes they were, a little wild, yet they were sleepy and kind, too. Surely her breath didn't smell the least bit of beer? No, not such a thoroughly estimable lady! Perhaps it was beer . . . the poor lady had to take for her health?

"Sonnie!" she said. "You've been having a heavy time, eh? Poor kid! You've got nice eyes, you know! Be careful what you do with 'em. It was eyes like yours what did for Bertha. Poor Bertha! She was a slim lass once, Prayer Book and all, and parasol on Sundays, all complete!"

"Who's Bertha, please?"

"Hush, sonnie, hush, I'm talking! Bertha? Don't tell Reginald—I'm Bertha! He wasn't a big feller neither, what done her in! And it wasn't for money, anyways, *I* can tell you. Love it was, and it isn't all the girls can say that! And he went with his lips this way and with his eyes that way, and where was you? Yes, he had eyes just like yours, Arthur! Your name *is* Arthur, isn't it?"

"No, my name's Philip!"

"Oh, we *are* a gentleman, aren't we? 'No, my name's Philip!' Haw! haw! Your name's *not* Philip, see? Your name's Arthur! What's good enough for *him* is

good enough for *you*, Arthur. So there, Arthur! . . . I'm sorry, kid, I'm not laughing at you. You see, I'm feeling all funny like. . . ." She passed the back of her hand across her forehead. A big bead of clammy sweat was thrust backward into the maze of her yellowish hair. "To tell you the honest, Arthur," she whispered, leaning over towards the boy, "he's been and pitched me out!" She lifted her voice. "Pitched me out, he has, the dirty heathen, at two o'clock in the morning! After all the times we've had together. Scarborough! Oh, Scarborough! The waiters stand round you and says 'Lobster, ma'am, *with* hock?' polite as polite! And here am I! Not good enough for the likes of him, ain't I? I'll show him up! Pitched me out. . . ." She took a fluffy handkerchief from the depths of her blouse and tapped each eye.

"I beg your pardon," said Philip with uneasy politeness, "have you had to leave home too?"

"Home, sonnie, home? I've got a *home*! Oh, it's all right about my *home*! But now and again a night out, eh, is the goods for Bertha! I'm one of the girls! I'm a bird! I'm not too particular about my perch, though I *have* got a little perch of my own! But I was . . . hello! Some one's coming! Can you see who it is?"

"Yes," said Philip. "It's a policeman, I think!"

She whispered into his ear anxiously. "Listen, I'm going to be your ma when he comes up, if he asks things. Understand? You've got the sick sudden, and I thought a walk would settle your stomach. Now. . . ."

The policeman advanced and halted. "Hello, missus!" he said, "Burglars or what?"

"No, constable," replied the lady with quiet dignity, "my poor Arthur's got a touch of the colic so I thought it best to give him a breath of air like." She was wiping

Philip's forehead with the little handkerchief. "Are you feeling better now, Arthur boy?"

"Best go and stow him between the sheets, lady. He'll catch his death in the damp air," the policeman growled amiably, and walked away.

The situation was altogether so inexplicable that Philip clutched feebly after the expression "I'm a bird!" as a clue which might perhaps lead him through the maze.

"A bird?" he asked. "Do you mean you sell birds?"

"Now you *are* a funny kid. No, I don't sell birds. Leastwise, I only sell one bird. See? That's a joke like. Ec, Arthur, but I did feel all goosy when that policeman came, didn't you? My heart's going like a pendulick yet, up and down, down and up. Well, I hopes your kidneys are better, anyhow. But you *do* look pale, kid! Anything wrong! How old did you say you was? Fourteen and a half? So am I, next birthday, ha, ha! Fourteen and a half! What must it be like to have a kid fourteen and a half? Sometimes I wishes . . ."

"Have you got no children yourself, ma'am?"

"What do you mean by asking me questions, Arthur? An honest woman like me! If it hadn't been for you, Arthur, and that time you kissed me under the mulberry tree . . . Remember? Oh kid, kid, I'm all sort of melted inside! Is your mother still living? She is, is she? Does she ever kiss you, Arthur? Here, like this, on your lips . . . like this . . . like this . . . Oh, my Arthur boy!"

She had seized him round the shoulders. Her great soft lips were hungrily raining kisses on his own. And her breath smelt beerily.

"Let me go!" he shouted with sudden fright. "Who

are you? What do you want?" He broke away and rubbed his lips savagely with his sleeve.

She was mopping large tears from her eyes. "Oh, I'm lonely, I'm so lonely!" she moaned. "He's gone and pitched me out and here's Arthur, and he shakes me off like a dog. Why ever was I born, God help me!"

A swift intense pang gripped Philip's stomach. He staggered against the wall. Globes of red fire juggled before his eyes.

"What's the matter? I didn't mean anything!" the woman exclaimed with alarm. "Tell me what's wrong!"

"I'm . . . I'm . . . hungry! . . ." moaned Philip.

"Hungry? When did you last have a bite?"

"Dinner-time!"

"And what have you been doing since?"

"I don't know! I'm only hungry!"

"Oh, poor dove, poor dove! Hungry are you? And here was me standing and you hungry and standing I was and talking, talking. Come to his own Bertha's. Come to my little perch, Arthur, sonnie, and I'll soon set you right. What about a rasher, eh, and some new bread and butter and a cup of strong hot tea? I'll put him on his little feet again! This way, sonnie . . . Lord God, what a life is Bertha's! It ain't far. It's just beyond the church straight along and the second to the left . . . unsteady on his legs, he's that hungry . . . ! Come with Bertha!"

Again Philip's hand was enclosed in the hand of the lady. Nothing in the world mattered except that strong hot cup of tea, that bread and butter, that rasher, whatever a rasher was! As they walked through the empty streets, the kettle boiled before him on a fire of mirage, the slaver of his hunger rimmed his tongue,

the "rasher" was frying ghostlily like a tail of fish on his mother's pan.

He heard her moaning musically over his head, like the doves in the immemorial elms. It was a strange farrago of Arthurs and Berthas and mulberry trees. He made no effort to follow the wanderings of her mind, which now and again would reach indignantly the brick wall of her late dismissal. Street succeeded street blankly and he found her shuffling at last for a key. They entered the dark lobby of a house.

"Go quiet, kid!" she murmured, "Rosie's got a pal in the parlour to-night, I think!"

They entered a room and the lady lit the gas, revealing a large soft bed that dominated the apartment. There was a table in a corner where stood a few utensils and a portable cooking-jet on a small round of oil-cloth.

"I'll tell you what, Arthur!" she said, "You'd best undress yourself and get into bed. I'll get your rasher ready in a jiffy."

Philip looked shyly up to her. He was not too faint to be unaffected by the thought of undressing before a strange lady. "I don't like," he muttered.

"It's all right," she assured him, "I'm used to it!"

"Perhaps you've got boys of your own?" Philip suggested helpfully.

"Oh yes, I've got lots of boys!"

He was tremendously tired. How invitingly that soft bed displayed its fat pillows. "I say, please!" he said awkwardly. "Will you look the other way?"

She tittered soundlessly. He saw she had a succession of chins and that each vibrated to her mirth. "All right, kid, I'm getting on with the food." As he un-

dressed, she cut the white bread into healthy slices and buttered them abundantly. Drowsily he saw her making the tea and he was almost asleep when he heard a loud simmering in a pan. He looked up, his mouth watering, and saw, impaled on her fork, a semi-translucent wafer of striped meat. He shook off the mist of sleep. "Tell me, if you don't mind. Is that a rasher?"

"Of course it is!"

"What is a rasher?"

"Bless my soul, bacon, *of course!*"

"Please, please!" he exclaimed. "I daren't eat bacon. I can't eat bacon!"

"That's how it is, is it?" She came closer curiously and examined his face. "Hum, yes! You're a little Jew-boy, aren't you?"

"I am!" He wondered what it was going to mean. Would she send him back into the night hungry, faint to death? Who could fathom the attitude of a given Gentile, man or woman, towards any accidental Jew-boy?

"Funny!" she pondered. "One Jew-boy pushes me out and I takes another Jew-boy in! All right, Arthur! Nothing's going to happen. You're still my own Arthur! Don't get frightened. But if you wont have bacon, you can only have sardines. I wasn't expecting no visitors to-night."

"Anything!" he murmured weakly.

He ate greedily. She took the food away when he had finished and sat by the bedside, looking into his face. She held his hand between her own soft hands. In two moments he was asleep.

When he awoke next morning amid the clank of trams and the calling of boys, he found himself embraced by two great white arms. With a sudden shudder of

realization, the events of yesterday and last night came back to him. The lady who had been so kind had gone into bed after him. It was rather stifling in the bed, he didn't like it! He didn't like lying in the arms of a strange lady. A qualm of dislike passed over him. As gently as possible, so as not to waken her, he slipped from her arms and from the bed and started to dress. Her face was distinctly unpleasant in the cold morning light. It was heavy and layers of fat swelled all round it. She had been crying, for the marks of tears ran dirtily down the bleared crimson of her cheeks. Her hair lay about lankly on the pillow. Yet there was something unutterably pathetic about her expression. How could he show her his gratitude? Where would he have been without her?

"It's all right, Arthur," he heard her say. "I know you're getting up. It's all right, just keep on dressing!" She did not open her eyes.

"I want to thank you very much!" he said lamely.

"No, kid, I want to thank you. I've never had it before. I don't suppose it'll ever come again. If ever you tells your mother about it, just say as Bertha thanks her. She's a mother and she'll understand maybe. So long, kiddie, so long!"

He was fully dressed. He made a movement in her direction. "No, kid. Don't shake my hand. Don't touch me. Before you have anything to do with Bertha again, just walk into the river without looking where you're going. Go away, for God's sake, go away! You'll find the front door open! Go back home! Your mother wants you!" Her unwieldy body turned round on the bed and the great face was buried in the pillow. He stole from the room, down the stairs, and through the front door. The door closed behind

him and he saw a milk cart drive by cheerily. Suddenly the figure of the strange kind lady became terrible and sad and very remote. He turned away from her house. Mechanically he set his face in the direction of home.

CHAPTER VIII

IF Philip's oration on the croft, despite its immediate consequences, had been a triumph for Philip, the fatality which had irresistibly drawn his feet homeward after his escapade with Bertha, without any reference to his will, was a triumph, if that was not too vulgar a word, for Reb Monash. It made clear to both the father and the son that Philip could not yet exist on his own initiative; however refractory a cog he was in the machinery of the house in Angel Street, that machinery was still the condition of his existence at all. It was the consciousness that this position had been made starkly clear by the issue of this latest event, and that this latest event was itself so tangible a grievance, that induced Reb Monash to interview Mr. Furness. After school on that same day, summoned by a special note from the Head, Philip stood apprehensively outside his door. He knocked timidly. A tremendous bellow filled the room and came gustily out into the corridor.

"COME in!" the first word reduplicate and reverberant like a shout in the cleft of hills. Philip entered, his ears singing. But the next moment the shout ebbed wholly from his ears when he saw Mr. Furness rise and come towards him with a smile at once admonitory and encouraging.

"Well, Philip, how are you?"

"I'm all right, sir, thank you, sir!"

"Who is the latest poet? Still Shelley? Keep to

Shelley, Philip; he knew more of the spirit of God than all the churches!"

"I've been reading Edgar Allan Poe, sir."

"Humph! I'm not so sure! Unhealthy, morbid! Hard time, poor fellow, on the other hand! Don't overdo him!"

"No, sir!"

"But to the matter in hand. You know why I've sent for you?"

"Yes, sir. He told me he was coming, sir."

"Your father's a great man, Philip. If in twenty years you're half the man he is, I'll be proud of you. You've been distressing him, he tells me. He's very concerned about you. Come now, what's wrong?"

"I can't explain, sir. We're different."

"You ran away from home lately and were out all night?"

Philip bit his lip. "Yes, sir."

"You're too old for that mock-romantic sort of thing. There's a strain of it in your essays. Mr. Gibson sent me up your essay on Julius Cæsar—something about 'he shall endure while the luminaries of history rot in oblivion!' Luminaries don't rot. Leave all that to the journalists, my boy, you can do better stuff. It wasn't only mock-romantic, it was cruel! Can you imagine how your mother slept that night? I'm rather ashamed of you. It was selfish. It was a pose."

"But you don't know, sir, what had happened the day before. I was nearly dead."

"I can understand. Public speaking, Socialism! All in their time! You're forcing things, you'll burn out and be cinders when you ought to be a man. No, you've not got the foundation for it. You've been slacking in form. What is it you go to poetry for, do you know?"

"I can't say, sir. Beauty, perhaps?"

"Yes, beauty! You don't know the beauty of labour, though. When you've mastered your Cæsar and your Greek Grammar—dull work, my boy, dull work!—you'll find poetry finer than Shelley, the poetry Shelley thought made his own like a marsh-lamp, the poetry of the Greeks. You started well, but your place in form has been going down steadily. Listen, Philip," he drew the boy nearer to him, "there's the question of your scholarship. Think what it'll mean to *her* if anything happened to your scholarship. You're not going to allow it, are you? And if you go down as steadily as you have been going down of late, I don't see what else can happen. What do you feel?"

There was a lump in Philip's throat. "I don't want anything to happen which will hurt her."

"Well, Philip, we understand each other. Put your hand to the plough like a man. Make a clean furrow and a deep one. I don't think we need say more, need we? Come and see me when you've made a fresh discovery in poetry, we'll talk about him. So good-bye now, Philip!"

Philip took the big man's hand and withdrew, feeling at once tearful, chastened, and absurdly exalted, and a solemn determination now possessed him to do some serious work before the examination which ended the year. Every evening he withdrew to his own back room which, out of most unpromising materials, his mother had converted into the semblance of a study. She had inserted ledges into soap boxes where his textbooks and poets were ranged above frills of pinky-white paper. She had covered the doddering table with a neat piece of parti-coloured cloth. A few bright pictures from magazines were tacked upon the walls. In recognition of the new spirit of industry earnestly avowed before her

she substituted for the deficiently-seated chair a rocking-chair which gave Philip an especial delight and won him to sympathy with aorist tenses and the optative mood. Not a word passed between Reb Monash and Philip. No current of sympathy ran to connect them. Philip displayed no readiness to compromise in the matter of a more ardent ritual. He would gabble off his prayers as quickly as possible, and then, with no attempt to hide his relief, turn to his books. His prayers were still tolerable, if barely, during the period when he lavished his enthusiasm on active Socialism. Now that he began to forswear his Socialistic delights, they began to be dust in his mouth. The half-hour long morning prayers of which he might understand one word in twenty, so wrought upon his nerves, that he felt like crying aloud sharply, particularly during that section of the devotion when he stood towards the East, placing together the inner sides of his feet, looking blankly through the wall into nothingness. One morning, during the sheer meaningless drift of his utterance, he curiously found himself repeating something of sweet and significant import. He was reciting, not the torpid Hebrew, but the languorous chimes of "Ulalume." Delightedly he continued the poem to its end and once more repeated it, till he realized that the time expected from him in the recapitulation of the "Nineteen Prayers" was at an end. He completed his morning's devotion with "Alastor." He had made a valuable discovery. The *ennui* of prayer was not now to gloom his faculties thrice daily. He could now pass in pageant before him all the comely shapes of poetry he had known.

He at no time made the definite discovery that Reb Monash had realized his substitution of poetry for prayer. If Reb Monash had made the discovery, it was not succeeded by such immediate castigation as

Philip knew well. It was as if Reb Monash had at last found out that at the end of these episodes the cause of piety, if anything, was weaker in his son's bosom than before. Darkness gathered over the house in Angel Street. A dim premonition of failure had settled upon Reb Monash's eyes, but sternly he fought against it. Mrs. Massel moved wanly and fearfully about the house, fearful of satisfying her hunger for Philip with a stroke of the hand or a word. Channah stayed out as long and discreetly as possible with her friends. A silence hung over the house, for Reb Monash's popularity as a raconteur was at an end. Not for years had the gathering in the kitchen taken place, where, centrally, Mrs. Levine sniffed, and the tale of Rochke's interment was told 'mid indignation and tears. Only at night was the silence broken when Philip had taken his books down to study in the kitchen and Mr. and Mrs. Massel had gone to bed. Then for an hour, or for two hours, Reb Monash would recount the iniquities of his son in a voice of loud, persistent monotony, still persistent while the advance of sleep was clogging its clarity.

Peculiarly Philip resented the incident of the rocking-chair. He had betrayed his liking for the chair in a casual conversation, comparing it with the inadequacy of the chair it had superseded. He found next day that his father had removed the chair. It was not wanted nor used by Reb Monash. It was, he reflected bitterly, pure dislike of the thought that he should enjoy even so feeble a pleasure as this. The action seemed almost automatic on the part of Reb Monash and was significant of the whole relation between the father and son.

As Philip sat on the lame, cracking chair before his table, the pointlessness of it worked him up to a white heat. It was not merely pointless. It lacked dignity. Reb Monash was the symbol of the older world, with iron

and austere traditions, with a forehead lit by the far lights of antiquity. But the incident of the rocking-chair stood stupidly out of keeping with the conflict of which now Philip was becoming intellectually conscious.

At this time, too, the domestic finances were more miserable than they had ever been before. The threat began to take shape that, at the end of the year, with the conclusion of his present scholarship, Philip would be expected to bring in his contribution to the household. All the more passionately, therefore, Philip applied himself to his books in the hope of a continuance of his scholarship allowance. Each evening, when the big kitchen table was cleared, he descended from the room upstairs with its meagre table and spread his books over the whole extent of the kitchen table. It was understood that in the constriction of finances, Philip was on no account to work by gaslight, a single candle being, Reb Monash affirmed, more than expensive enough.

In truth these nights were cheerless almost as a charnel-house. It was not merely that the ghost of his mother seemed always hovering ineffectually about the room, as if she lifted her hands for a peace which came not, or that his own personality surged uneasily and wretchedly in undecided war against the immanent personality of his father. Presences more tangible and numerous filled the room with detestable sounds. Black, heavy beetles came drowsily and innumerably ambling from the wainscoting and from among the embers of the extinguished fire. He could hear them crackling and rustling where the wall-paper had swollen from the wall. They filled him with loathing. They were the quintessence of the ugliness of Doomington; but much of Doomington had been charmed away for him by poetry, the beetles no charm could exorcise. Sometimes his hatred so swept him away that he ran about

the room, treading quashily on the hordes of beetles where they lumbered along the floor. But the more their black bodies burst into white paste below his boot, the more unconcernedly they emerged from their hiding places. They seemed in their pompous progression to wink and leer at him, where the dim light of the candle caught their oily shells. Then a nausea gripped him, his feet were sticky and unclean, the gall churned in his body. They crept on the table sometimes, they dropped with a sucking thud from the bulging whitewash of the ceiling. Once he lifted a glass of water from the table to his lips and found his lips in contact with the body of a beetle on the rim. That night he was so wild with terror that he lit the gas—unconscionable extravagance, but as he sat feebly in the chair, he could hear the foul battalions rustling, whispering, smirking towards their chinks.

His eyes had always been weak. The working by candle-light gave him so much pain that he now formed the habit of lighting the gas when the last syllables of the monologue upstairs had died away. One night he left the kitchen-door open and the light staggered out into the hall. A dim beam thrown upward somehow attracted the attention of Reb Monash, who had ceased intoning that night more from weariness than sleep. A shout of anger filled the house. Tremblingly Philip extinguished the gas and pored aching over his texts by dim candle-light. It was with infinite caution, and when his eyes stood almost blindly in his skull, that now he ventured to light the gas. More than an hour after midnight on one occasion he stood on the table and applied the candle to the gas-jet. It was a heavy and oppressive night, but he had much work to do ; the examinations were at hand. Again a long time passed. The sweat stood clammily on Philip's head. His lungs gaped for

air. He placed a chair against the door and held it half-open, so that, while a little light escaped, a little air came in. Once more he buried himself deep in his work. Wearily his eyes went on from page to page. He entered almost into a trance of dull pre-occupation with the lifeless books. Nothing existed for him beyond the poor round of grammar, dictionary, text, notebook. Life was neither a freedom nor a slavery; it was a concentration upon unimportant importances, emptily insistent upon themselves. The sense which informed him that Reb Monash stood at the door was neither sight nor sound. He was *aware* of his presence. His heart seemed to flicker hesitantly down the depths of his being, until it left a blank behind his ribs, where a mouth entered whose teeth were fear and pain and anger. Anger! Surely it was not right for any man, in any relation, let alone a father, to steal like a criminal from his bed, soundlessly, terribly, and stand there with shut, pale lips! There were limits to the methods correct in the most comprehensive fatherhood. And his crime? He was doing his work, nothing more than his work! His tongue was chafed and sick. Perhaps it was an illusion after all. Surely he was alone, he had heard nothing. He lifted his eyes. The actual physical presence of Reb Monash struck him sharply and heavily like a blow on the cheek. He gasped with fright. He stood there forbidding and dark, but a strange light round him and his dim night-clothes. He was supernatural. He stood there taut with hate. He said not a word. Philip's jaw relaxed, his eyes staring dazed into his father's eyes. They stared at each other across a gulf of deafening noise and of ghastly silence. Whose feet had brought him down silent as death from his bed, who invested him with that cadaverous power? Illimitably beyond him

stretched ancestral influences into the bowels of time. There was one slipping away, fruit of their loins, one for whom each had been a Christ crucified, slipping from the fold of their pride into the pagan vast. Behind the boy's head boyish presences groped towards him. . . .

The spell was snapped by a hurried pattering of feet downstairs. The scared face of Mrs. Massel appeared.

"What dost thou mean?" she wailed, "what dost thou mean? Go! Touch him not! He might have died with fright! What art thou? What dost thou mean by it?" She had at last asserted herself. With weak hands she pushed him away from the door. "Come, leave the boy! He will go to bed at once! See, his face is like a tablecloth! Come, oi, oi, come!"

"Go thou in front!" said Reb Monash. He entered the kitchen, where Philip cowered on his chair. He turned out the gas and without a word went upstairs to his room. A dull idiocy numbed Philip's brain. He put his head down between his hands, and it slipped before long on to the table. Here Mrs. Massel found him after some hours when she came down to light the fire. As he shook himself, a beetle fell sleepily from his sleeve.

CHAPTER IX

SOME time previously, in the spring of the same year, the walls of Doomington had fallen to their last stone upon the blast of the trumpets of spring. Philip and Harry had adventured one afternoon beyond the moor called "Baxter's Hill" at the north of the town and found themselves by the side of a Mitchen distinctly cleaner than the river which flowed behind the wire factory at the bottom of Angel Street. They had walked up-stream for several miles out to a place of fresh fields and young lambs skipping. It was true that chimneys still punctuated every horizon with smoky fingers. But here and there were thickets of trees where the lads lay embowered in green peace, conscious of thick grass only and the speech of leaves. They both claimed the distinction of having first sighted the shimmering and enchanted carpet of blue below a sun-pierced canopy of foliage. Here they abandoned themselves to the first wild rapture of Spring—the first rapture of Spring Philip had known—burying their faces among the dewy bells. Further and further to the dusk they went, until a new town, flinging its van to meet them and to meet the Spring in their button-holes and hearts, said, "Advance no more!" Weary and sleepy and very hungry they came home that night, but their arms were lush with heaped bluebells and the knowledge of Spring was steady in them. They knew a place where Doomington was a lie and earth was soft.

Into this place, in the attenuated figure of Alec Segal, the "clever devil" whose acquaintance Philip had made several months ago, came Atheism. The recent years of his history had not left Philip wholly unprepared for the assault against Judaism. But when Segal said casually that the Holy Bible's self was just a bundle of musty papyri, and God a dispensable formula, he was painfully shocked.

"Look here, Segal!" he said, "How can you say such a thing? Anything might happen to a chap!"

Segal took off his cap and made an awkward gesture towards the implicit deity. "Right-ho!" he exclaimed, "Happen away!"

Philip held his breath for a moment. Nothing took place. Only a cow mooed contentedly.

Segal was slightly taller than Harry and a little his senior. The angle of his nose related him more directly than either of his two friends to the root stock of his race. Yet he had neither the Heinesque vehemence of the one nor the inveterate romance of the other. He could, in fact, hardly be thought of in terms of character. He seemed to be the sum of certain intellectual qualities. His sole morbidity was a ruthless passion for logic. Poetry, which in various ways had brought the three youths together, interested him, but neither for ethical nor for æsthetic reasons. Each poem was an interesting proposition in itself, like a mixture in a test tube at his school laboratory. It had the mechanical attributes of rhythm and rhyme and metaphor constructing a mechanical whole.

But on thinking the matter over, after frequent and painful discussion, Philip realized that Segal's attitude so shocked him because it dared to put into blunt words something he had long been timorously feeling. By the Bible, of course, Segal meant religion generally. The

Bible was the foundation of Judaism and therefore of Christianity, which, he had long ago decided, in any case hadn't much claim to serious consideration. His own remark had been sound enough ; he had declared that the disappearance of religion would leave the world "jolly empty." But empty of what things ? Empty as a garden without weeds. What stupidity, cruelty, ignorance, flourished below the damp boughs of religion from border to border of the world ! And what things would still flourish if religion were cut down ! Tall trees of liberty, fine flowers of poetry !

What was it he had always felt wrong with Judaism ? What did it lack ? It was a quality not entirely missing even from the garbled Christianity that came his way. The Baptist Missionary Chapel was as fervent an enemy of this quality as the most vigorous Judaism. But dim intimations had come by him on the wind of another Christian spirit. Here there were white lilies and blue gowns pointed with stars ; there was soft singing at evening and the burning of many candles ; there were superb altars, marble and kingly. Superb altars—the Baptist Missionary Chapel ! Christianity contained both. But this quality was eternally triumphant in the grand false superstitions of Greece and Rome. Here there were white pillars in a noon of hyacinth ; baskets of wrought gold held violets and primroses ; there were processions of chiselled gods before whom maidens scattered a long foam of petals ; there were lads running races and the wind was in their hair ; the wind was a god, there were gods in the thickets of olive and in the translucent caves of the sea.

Beauty ! Poetry ! This was what he needed most. This was what that old world gave. What delight did his fathers know, generation beyond generation, in the comely things of the world ? What statuary had come

down and what pictures of burnished gold and azure ? What dances were there to the rising sun and in procession with the slow stars ? If any of his fathers had made him a graven image, he was stoned and the thunders of those hoary enemies of lovely things shook over the cowering tribes. There had descended to him a tradition of tragedy and pride. Of beauty, none. There was, for example, the *shool*. How the air was foetid ! How the walls were bare ! How the hangings before the ark were tawdry ! How the prayers were raucous, how the air drooped for lack of poetry !

Ah ! the sense of relief which began to possess him when now, throwing forward his chest, and breathing even in midmost Doomington the deep air of liberty, he realized how vain were all his innumerable ceremonies ; that God did not require of him these things and these ; He did not sit there watchfully counting the syllables of prayer His votaries uttered, sit there like a miser counting his pieces of gold ; that the subterfuges and evasions of ritual which had given him frequent unease were not fraught with more than a merely local and temporary danger. Forward from phylacteries ! They had slipped from his arms like manacles. They lay discarded like the slough of a serpent, coiled round his feet. What there was now of poetry in the Feast of Tabernacles, in the prophetic and vague beards of the old men, in the synagogue-chanting on darkening Saturday evenings, in the mingled array of the Passover Tables, in the puckered faces of the antique women muttering their year-long prayers, in the blast of the liberating horn upon the Fast of Atonement—what there was of poetry in them, he was free to understand ; for they were shorn of all that had made them forbidding ; they were not symbols of dark terror, they were pathways into the heart of the world. And with these he was free to

understand what there was of poetry in the vague Christian lilies, in the burning of candles before the shrines of picturesque saints, brothers of those other and marble gods. All that these Greek gods had of poetry and all their groves and their broad-browed morning lads and the virginal worshippers before those altars of poetry—all, all these things were his. He was winning to freedom after much slavery.

But the acceptance of a general diminution in the divine attributes, through which the Godhead gradually became a vague half-credible abstraction, was attended by a campaign much more injurious to Philip's ease. His elders had approached God with as much terror as understanding when they made any advances in the celestial direction. It was reassuring to realize that if God was being divested of His raiment of love, He was losing proportionately the lightning of His jealousy and the bolt of His somewhat sectarian wrath. Yet simultaneously, as Segal and Harry agreed with no apparent remorse, it was imperative to abandon the immortality of the soul. To Philip there was something homicidal, matricidal, in the facile way with which they consigned to worms as their ultimate doom the folk whom they might be expected to love most dearly. They admitted it was an unpleasant pill to swallow, but in the wind of truth their personal predilections, they avowed, were as chaff! Who were they to stand up against Logic, against Law? "Truth the grand," a poet had said, "has blown my dreams into grains of sand!"

Segal remained imperturbable amid the crash of boyish comfort and illusion. His own extinction being the disintegration of a number of acute faculties, there would be no wraith of frustrated passion and insatiate hungers to move forlornly through the Godless void. There was a keen, bright fascination in this self-suffi-

ciency for both the tempestuous utilitarianism of Harry and the inchoate poetry of Philip for whom this friendship involved almost a pungent ecstasy of self-extinction, like the repeated assault of the moth against the poised, unreluctant flame. These conclusions plunged Harry into a more fiery round of Socialistic activities than he had yet known. If the oppressed classes of the world would in no future state achieve equality, if the capitalists in no democracy of spirits would be set by counter-balance to hew wood and draw water for wage slaves there triumphant, all the more reason then to achieve an earthly Utopia, to rouse young Doomington to a sense of its manifold wrongs and, in the concrete, to stand as Socialist candidate for the coming parliamentary election at the Highfield Grade School. Philip, on the other hand, felt what happened in this miserable and abortive world hardly mattered, when all its insignificant schemes were doomed, collectively and individually, to sudden and absolute annihilation. The extinction of souls was not an attractive philosophy, he reflected bitterly, but there seemed no alternative but to accept it as a general truth. Not wholly consciously and with a passionate stupidity he applied three individual cases to the test of the general assertion; the survival of Shelley's soul, his mother's and his own. What arguing could there be about these three and, least of all, about Shelley's. His mother's death and his own being so utterly incredible, so much *contra naturam*, their souls existed in an ether beyond all jeopardy. Yet Shelley was demonstrably dead. But was he dead indeed? He realized now for the first time how Shelley was the *lar* of all his years. He might vaguely and unhappily acquiesce in the [destruction of souls 'en [masse, but nothing could convince him that Shelley did not triumph, personally, separately, in the clouds of morning and ride

the horses of the wind ; that he was not still the conscious spirit of song wherever birds and waters sang ; that the pyre had dissipated for ever that unconquerable spirit.

Such then was the dubious and difficult current of Philip's atheism. And it was a strange fortune that these speculations should most have waged war within him at that period of the Jewish year when the festivals which culminate in the New Year and the Day of Atonement demanded unusually frequent attendance within the walls of the *Polisher Shool*, the inner temple of phylacteries, where Philip still so long and so frequently was held captive.

The worshipper entered the synagogue through a narrow door to the left of an establishment for fried fish and chips. The odour, therefore, of these commodities rising through the building interpenetrated the atmosphere of prayer, until prayer and chipped potatoes became inextricably woven together, and at no period in his life could Philip pass beyond a fried fish shop without feeling a far-off reflux from the old call to worship. Indeed, Philip's earliest anthropomorphism represented the Deity as some immense celestial figure in white cloth and a white hat standing above the fume and splendour of a great concave oven where He shovelled upon his tray the souls of human beings, brown and crisp, and resembling mystically the strips of potatoes shovelled by Mr. Marks upon a less divine tray in a chip-shop less august.

The worshipper now climbed a narrow staircase, and passing by the women's door entered the synagogue proper. If he had endured some recent loss in his family, the beadle from within would declare robustly, "Look ye towards the bereaved one!" who would enter with drooped head, the object of the regulated curiosity of bearded and beardless alike. Only a thin

wooden partition divided the women's from the men's section, so that on one side praise was lifted to the Lord by the women because He had made them what they were, on the other, in unabashed juxtaposition, heartier praise was lifted by the men because He had made them men. Little boys could stand quite easily upon the forms and look down upon the women swaying in their old black silks and beneath their crazy cherry-garlanded bonnets. Here stood the *rebitsin*, Serra Golda, the most pious and wrinkled of Hebrew women, who, because it is a *mitzvah*, an act of grace, to stand as long as possible during the Day of Atonement, stood all that hot long day on her ulcered feet, even though the mere creeping from her own dun parlour not far away had been one hard agony. Here too stood Mrs. Massel, very quiet and shy among the voluble women, wiping her eyes sometimes and repeating the prayers quietly, or perhaps, becoming conscious of the dark watchful scrutiny of her boy beyond the partition, lifting to him her face for one sweet moment and dropping it again towards her Prayer Book.

Against the centre of the Eastern wall, which was at right angles with this partition, stood the Ark wherein the Scrolls of the Law reposed among mothy velvet, themselves enveloped in a petticoat of plush whence hung silver bells. The whole Ark was curtained by a pall of scarlet, lettered with gold thread. At the centre of the masculine section (whose dimensions were some fifty by forty feet) stood the pulpit, some inches above the general level, where the whole service was incanted and the occasional auxiliaries from the audience were summoned. Below the pulpit and facing the Ark, a coffin-like desk drawn closely against their amplitudes, sat the elected officers for the year, the *parnass* and the two *gabboim*. Reb Monash, the power of whose oratory

was so signal an ornament to the *Polisher Shool*, sat upon the right-hand side of the Ark itself, against the wall. The benches ran parallel along the *shool* on both sides of the pulpit. In the strict, if uncongenial, interests of truth it is necessary to say that every member of the synagogue above the age of thirty spat, and not a few below that age, these last retaining the easier hygiene of Poland and further Europe. The more honourable worthies had their own particular joints in the boarding for their expectorations, although, if they were more than usually afflicted, they would proceed to the doorway, returning thence purged. Hence experience alone was an adequate pilot for an unscathed journey between any point of the synagogue and the door. There were times when such tender breasts as Philip's were so nauseated by the persistent spitting that their hearts seemed to suspend beating from sheer sickness. On two occasions Philip's head fell back bloodlessly and with a bang on the hard wood behind him and he was taken away to the lavatory, where several men and women filled their mouths with water and cascaded his face for some minutes until he opened his eyes. No season in the year was hot enough to justify the opening of the windows. A current of the comparatively clean air from Doomington Road was declared with horror to be "A draught! A draught!" and with patriarchal fury the windows were closed to. Sometimes on a particularly sultry day an enterprising youth might open a window for several inches without drawing the attention of the elders. It would be unobserved for perhaps half an hour as no slightest movement of air was created. Then the alarm would be given. Immediately angry shouts of "A draught! A draught!" would be heard, some would huddle their arms in the cold, some would cough vehemently in the blizzard of self-suggestion. Occasionally

the younger generation might make the effort to stand up shoulder to shoulder for the rights of ventilation, but so furious a hubbub would be created, the unease spreading itself into the women's department where a clucking would be heard as of an apprehensive farmyard ; but especially the thunders of Mr. Linsky would be so olympically august, that the younger generation would subside and once more the opaque odours coagulate.

The *Polisher Shool* was, it may be deduced, a somewhat reactionary institution. But occasionally Reb Monash was called upon to deliver an oration in a synagogue of such Æsculapian sanity that the atmosphere seemed positively to evoke the vacant silence of Gentile worship. The definitely English congregations were assembled actually in superseded chapels, and here the laws of ventilation were no less rigorous than in the offices of the Doomington Board of Health. But these lacked the element of personality with which the *Polisher Shool* was perhaps too copiously endowed. And if all his life Philip had not been made unceasingly conscious of the dislike entertained for him in cordial measure by the body politic of the synagogue, he would have derived much consolation from the study of its personalities, of the rotund Reb Yonah, of Reb Shimmon like an army with banners, and the wizened *shammos*, the beadle, flapping about on loose soles like a disreputable ghost.

Philip's attitude towards *shool* was immediately prejudiced on his mere going thither. For almost from earliest times, not appreciably long, it seemed, after he had discarded the blue wool and tassels of infancy, he had been expected to crown his small figure with a large black bowler hat ; and bowler hats, as could not be denied, were *bloody*. He felt stupidly self-conscious as he walked along by his father's side, as if all Doomington stared and jeered. If Reb Monash met a friend and these

pursued a common way to the synagogue, Philip would hover behind, remove the bowler hat, and pretend it was somebody else's—he was only “holding it like.”

There was a brood of young gentlemen very popular among their elders at the *Polisher Shool*. There was Hymie, whose eyes were large and innocent and who helped himself daily from his father's till. His voice was the voice of an exceptionally guileless thrush and he sang Yiddish songs at *Shalla-shudos*, the Saturday afternoon gatherings. There was Moishe, who asked such clever questions so sweetly concerning the weekly portion, that they were answered with delight by the expository old men, excepting when, as they somewhat frequently did, they involved sexual references. Moishe's mind was prematurely a cesspool. Others also there were to whom piety was a paying proposition, and two were pious because they were thus made. Philip could not throw in his lot with this company. And the whole *shool* remembered how the synagogue-president, the *parnass*, had, some years ago, pressed him to drink of the Sabbath night cup of wine; how Philip had refused it both because he didn't like wine and because he didn't like a public exhibition of a deed tinged with piety; how the pride of the *parnass* had been aroused and how he endeavoured to force the wine between Philip's lips while the whole *shool* awaited the issue; how Philip had suddenly thrust aside the foot of the beaker so that the wine fell stickily round the respective trousers of himself and the *parnass*.

Philip felt instinctively how everybody stiffened with dislike when he entered the synagogue, a dislike accentuated by the universal honour with which his father was regarded. Had he but been the son of a bootmaker, the Judaic virtues would not have been so prominently expected from him; they would have said “a boot-

maker remains a bootmaker, even to his remote posterity !” But being the son of Reb Monash, whose black hair and beard his son was even now dimming with disastrous grey, Philip was a public scorn.

All which did not embarrass Philip so much as the interminable hours he spent behind the shut windows in the stale air—while bluebells lilted afar off and birds spoke their foreign exquisite languages. And now above all a widening had thrust his horizon far away and far away from the smoky limits of Doomington, far from the mythic circuit of green waves wherein England lay, far from the last hills of the world, out to the tingling spaces and the royal stars.

For Segal, who had brought the dissolution of atheism with him, had brought also astronomy : with a singing for the quiet sun and a meaning for the hollows of sky. It was, of course, a long time now that for both Philip and Harry the flat layer of earth had dropped away, coiling round themselves to produce the globe they had seen in effigy, so far back as the days of Miss Green. But Segal introduced, as preliminaries, Sir Robert Ball and Proctor and Camille Flammarion, and a knowledge of constellations, the nature of nebulae, star dust and the Milky Way, which united the three boys with a bond of fervent interest. For Segal it meant illimitable fresh spaces for the plummet of logic ; and because Space was infinite, no room was left for God, who, if He existed at all, could thus only be attenuated into nothingness. Harry dreamed of an undiscoverable planet where equity among its mortals prevailed ; for in the infinite types of star which space permitted through infinite time, it was evident that one such star had been or was or might be developed ; it was to this ideal star that he hitched the lumbering wagon of earth. To Philip, the Milky Way was a divine bluebell bank dancing by the

borders of a celestial river. The stars fed him with innumerable new images, giving to his conception of poetry a depth and height. And here once more, as if to consummate the significance Shelley had involved through each succeeding phase of Philip's adolescence, just as he had been found to crystallize a world in which complete escape from Doomington mud and brick might be realized ; to hold the stormy banner of Socialism ; to smite down the hydra-heads of religion ; so now Shelley was seen to be a poet to whom the fields of stars were more naturally a place for wandering and singing than deathly fields of sorrel and marguerite ; he was the Starry Poet.

"I say, you chaps !" Harry said excitedly one day, "there's a telescope in the Curiosity Shop opposite the gaol ! What about it ?"

"The inference being," suggested Segal, "that as soon as we've pinched the telescope the gaol's waiting on the other side of the road ?"

"No, old Cartwright's too watchful and the gaol too uncomfortable. Didn't you say so yourself when you came out after your last six months' hard ? What about clubbing together and buying it ?"

"I've got fourpence !" said Philip.

"I've not got that !" said Segal. "But let's find out about it. It's just the thing we want. Ye Gods, we might find a new comet ! Beware, Halley !"

They appeared at Mr. Cartwright's shop and asked the price nonchalantly of a set of chessmen. "And what's the price of this telescope ?" asked Harry with such an exaggerated gesture of indifference that Mr. Cartwright could not fail to perceive the yearning of his bowels.

"A quid !" said Mr. Cartwright.

It was so shattering a sum that, whereas they would

have attempted bargaining if he had said, "Three-and-sixpence," they now said brokenly, "All right! We'll buy it."

Mr. Cartwright was so astonished at this acquiescence that, taken similarly off his guard, "You can have it for twelve bob!" he gasped.

"O—er—I'm sorry! We've not got more than three just now! We'll save up the rest!"

Quick change of tactics on the part of General Cartwright, who has time to recover his breath. "All right!" he declared, mouth tight at the corners, "Leave that as a deposit and I'll reduce the price to eighteen and six!" he said munificently.

Hence the telescope, which, though its actual magnifying powers were somewhat scanty, served both as an outward symbol of their devotion to stars and moon and as the token of their friendship. A new experience now entered their lives, a state, an exaltation, a mystic absorption of themselves into the heart of night from which the logician was by no means immune and which he anticipated with as much fearful joy as his friends. It was called "going deep," and was a state which they could not cajole or anticipate but came when it listed and departed as mysteriously. It was the fine flower of their friendship, coming only at night during their contemplation of skies.

They would find as they talked of Cassiopeia or the far-flung wing of Aquila or Vega's blue swords or the misty Pleiad sisters, a thinning of their own voices, a growing outward and aloft. It seemed that the hulk of body lay supine on the grimy soil of Doomington while their souls quietly adventured among the high places. It was an ether where extremes met, the young logician carried along a steep straight line by the inherent ecstasy of Law to a place where, by different curves of passionate

imagination, his friends had ascended mysteriously those ladders of poetry between earth and heaven. It was perhaps a shadow of that state of fleshly innocence towards which the mystics have yearned, that state which Adam supremely knew when Eve had not yet been torn from his side. It was a state doomed to last not long, to re-occur less frequently as the mists began to cloud their eyes insistently and to stifle in their ears the clarity of starry silence. They did not know how long a time lasted their "goings deep"—some moments only, perhaps, sometimes a dim trance of a fleshless hour. But when they descended from those places, their chaffings and bickerings were resumed with difficulty, as if their bickering gainsaid a stilled voice they had heard.

One incident each of them remembered most clearly out of this time of astronomy—the night of the moon's eclipse. With various degrees of difficulty they obtained permission to stay out till morning, and at midnight they met upon the highest point of Baxter's Hill. A moorland air came wandering in from the adjacent country, and because the chimneys had ceased for the night to thicken the atmosphere, this strange sweet air came timidly towards them, as a stranger little welcomed in these parts. They lay back upon the grass looking towards those regions of the sky where the moon did not yet dim the stars to extinction. The telescope passed from hand to hand and they spoke of the ashen hollows in the moon, Segal naming her features, and emphasizing placidly how, soon or late, this earth whereon they lay now should have exhausted all her fires.

Very quietly they spoke in the still night air until a sound of terror was heard from some hidden hollow and the words were stricken on their lips. The sound was heard again and again, curdling their blood.

"A woman's being murdered somewhere!" exclaimed Philip.

"Baxter's Hill has got a dirty reputation. I wonder if a fellow's trying to get the better of a girl?" Harry whispered.

"Listen! Isn't it a rotten sound!"

The truth occurred to Segal. "You prize fools! Oh, you ultra prize fools!" he cackled. "It's a sheep! Ha, ha! A sheep! And you're two more!"

They found the midnight full of curious noises in which man and his works had no concern. An owl hooted. A nightjar skimmed an edge of darkness silently, then turned his hoarse wheel. Insects crept below grasses. The boys had little known how the watchful forces of nature crept back to the place Doomington had usurped when, during the night, the town's fummy power was relaxed.

When at last the dark band of eclipse sliced the rim of the moon, Philip was drowsing. Harry seized him suddenly. Philip sprang to his feet. "Look! Look! The moon! The eclipse!"

Slowly the transformation took place. The three lads stood there tensely straining towards the moon. It seemed that the world had no sound during this breathless miracle. No owl cried and no sheep lifted a voice from the hollows. The moorland wind stopped, the scant grasses did not move. A train in a far cutting uttered a startled cry and subsided. Until out of the white purity was made a disk of lurid and burnished splendour, like the bossed shield of a Titan who strode across space while the issues were still dubious of celestial wars.

The lads waited on the moor till dawn came, so that the fringe of that night should not be sullied by their return to Doomington dust. Dawn came with a cool

breath from the East and a line of pale green lying like a blade on the far-seen Mitchen. A sword was swung above the slopes, glancing with gold and crimson. The edge of the sun was at last visible. The boys made their way homeward along the quiet streets.

As Reb Monash ascended the pulpit on the second morning of *Rosh Hashonah*, the New Year festival, to deliver a *drosheh*, an oration, in his capacity as professional orator or *maggid*, the incidents of the eclipse were hazily passing through Philip's mind. For some time Reb Monash's utterance was calm and measured, not interfering with the flow of Philip's recollections. But a sudden note of passion rising and again falling away flickered across Philip's brain, as a vein of fire smoulders with the turning of an opal, and when the opal is turned away is swallowed in pearl-mist and blue. He was occupying the seat vacated by his father against the side of the Ark. He looked up towards Reb Monash who again was speaking abstractly, evenly, as if he were finding his way somewhither. There was still on his face a certain air of preoccupation which Philip had noticed all that morning. It had been a morning signalized also by a few low kind words he had said to Philip which had touched the boy curiously; and, at one moment, he had looked sombrely, gently, into his son's eyes, placing a hand on his shoulder as if to hold him back from the darkness towards which his steps were tending. Philip had looked back uneasily into his eyes, wondering. A shadow of so much sadness in his father's face had produced a sick yearning in the deeps of the boy's body. His own eyes had filled strangely, but he had clenched his fists and set his teeth. His father had turned away from him and walked back into the *chayder*. . . .

Reb Monash standing in the pulpit became mysteriously depersonalized. He became a force capable at one moment of bringing tears to the eyes of his harshest listeners and the next of convulsing them with laughter. Philip realized from what deep well of oratory sprang that runlet which had burst forth upon the Longton croft from his lips. In the pulpit Reb Monash lost sight of his personal sorrow and became the voice of the age-long sorrow of his race. At such a time he stood like a bard, his *tallus* hanging down in great folds, his voice of such strength and sweetness that a weeping came from the women's section upon its first syllables.

The first part of the morning's oration proceeded on traditional lines. He subtly interwove the text he had chosen with the message of the festival now celebrated. Upon single words he threw such diverse and strange lights that they were opened up gallery beyond gallery, like a mine of meanings. Each sentence was illuminated by his inexhaustible fertility of quotation, each quotation prefaced by the "as it stands in the passage." He elaborated each point by a swift "*zu moshel*," to give a parallel. But all this skill was the routine of the *maggid's* profession; he had graduated with these arts in many schools. He was proceeding further than this; his voice still was subdued, patient, as if realizing that beyond these thickets was a clearing of intense light, if but steadily he made his way. Then suddenly he emerged from the tortuous paths and the tangle of undergrowth, with a loud resonant cry as he came upon the clear space at the centre of his heart.

"But is it truly the beginning of the year? Shall it be a rejoicing for our fathers and for our sons if the birth of to-day is not a birth but a death? *Hayom harras olom!* But think, my brothers and my sisters,

into what world the Year, the Law, came first ! For the world was void and dark, and the spirit of God moved upon the waters, and the spirit of God was the Law. The godlings were of stone and of wood whom you would kick and they were fallen down, and their number was the sands of the sea. Then to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob the one God vouchsafed Himself and in His book His breath is fire. How He was gracious to our fathers beyond all their deserts when, recollecting the impieties of Egypt, they made themselves a false God, a Calf of Gold. But yet He did not abandon them, nor in after times. Always he held out His right arm over them, yea He shattered the gathered enemies, even with the jawbone of an ass He shattered them. Whole races of the godless were destroyed in His love for the Law He had uttered and the Chosen People to whom He had entrusted the Law. Then our parents fell upon evil ways, they took to themselves the daughters of the Gentile, they no more circumcised their sons into the company of the Chosen. Too many, too many to tell were the sorrows that came down upon us. Our vineyards were taken away, our crops were wasted, our daughters stolen away from us. The gold and the ivory of Solomon's temple were despoiled, the Holy City was a waste of weeds. Yet once more in His goodness Jerusalem arose and once more in their hardness of heart the people sought the false gods : until the accursed Titus came upon us and the walls for ever fell. By the waters of Babylon, we sat down and wept ; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion ; we hanged our harps on the willows in the midst thereof. But lo, my brothers, do not weep ; my sisters, one thing was left to us, as a tabernacle in the wilderness, a dove on the void of waters, a sword in our right hand, a burning bush ; that Law which each year begins and

ends but has no ending. For upon it once again when the years of the *gollus* are numbered shall the Temple be rebuilt. Yea, when the trumpet shall sound, the corpses of the Chosen shall be awakened; they shall rise from their graves and roll from the scattered lands, beyond seas and hills, once more to the hills of Zion. How shall the gems on the breast of the High Priest shine and his garments be of dazzling white! How a Miriam shall sing a sweeter song on further shores of deeper waters and more divinely cloven than the waters of the Red Sea! Then at last shall Moses arise from his undiscovered grave to enter that land he had but seen afar off. The land shall be flowing with milk and honey and the grapes on the vines be fat. Our matrons shall be fruitful with blessed children and our daughters be glad. The Law shall be as a sign upon the forehead of our sons.

How it shall all be forgotten, the valley of the shadow, the centuries of *gollus*! Did our fathers lie on the rack of the Spaniards and were their thumbs torn from their hands? It shall be as a mist of ten years gone by. There were they crouched in cellars, old *bobbies* leaning against the damp walls, an old *zadie* reading by the little candle of the goodness of the God of Israel. The boys looked up listening with shining eyes. There was the sound of bursting doors, but the old voice did not falter. There was the clatter of iron boots down the stone stairway; but there was no ceasing in the praise of God. And though the old men, the women, yea, the children sucking still quietly at their mothers' breasts, were tied against stacks of wood, and the flame withheld if they but forswore Israel, still was the Law to them like a cool cavern full of the fragrance of God, even in the very centre of fire.

Pogrommen have there been in those lands whence

we have come ? Who shall remember them ? Though the babies were torn from the wombs of mothers, and maidens violated in the streets at noon, all shall be, because the Law has been given to us, as dust in the roadway !

But hold ! What do I say ? If once more the children of Israel shall build them a Calf of Gold, if they shall turn to the heathen things, who shall keep back the lightnings of God, our God strong in love but terrible in jealousy ? Shall not we be utterly swept away till there is no memory of our defeats and no trace of our victories ? Shall it all be vain, the rack, the fire, the mother disembowelled in pregnancy ?

I say to you, look at our children, for a bad spirit has come into these lands. I say not to you, our brothers and sisters, but to you, to you, our children, keep ye your goings within the fold of the Law ! Have you need then of pogroms and swords that you shall remain with God ? Because, in this place, He has withheld them, thank Him for that He loves you more. Behold, age behind age our sufferings and our triumph go. Bring it not all to naught. Make not the bloodshed to be useless as water. For the air is thick with the voices of the dead, saying : ' Hold, hold by the banner of Israel ! Let it not fall from you ! Proudly we held it though the blood dripped from our fingers ! '

Lo, our children, you make us to you as strangers, you harden our hearts with anger. But we are ready with our love for you when you follow upon our ways, which are the ways of the countless dead. Let not for little things our heritage be squandered ; let not the Maccabæan banner be smirched, nor false gods enter into our tabernacles which we build now upon a wandering thousandfold bitterer than the forty years. We lift

out our arms to you. Join us in singing the Lord's song ! May the next year see us in Zion ! ”

There were one or two looked with alarm upon the face of Philip staring from the wall against the Holy Ark. His face was bloodless, his eyes round as if in nightmare. Not a sound was heard when Reb Monash came weakly down from the pulpit. No one knew where to turn his eyes. As his father came nearer to resume his seat, Philip gave a sudden convulsive start, then fell jerkily towards the form where he had sat before the *drosheh*. A tiny whispering arose in the congregation, as of leaves after a windless noon when a first breeze shakes, or of still waters ruffled. The *parnass* uttered a deep *oi ! oi !* absently clapping his hands three or four times ; the weeping of the women decreased ; the men bent towards each other and talked. Some one ascended the pulpit to begin the second part of the service.

Reb Monash had chosen well ; for that preoccupation which had held his face all that morning now held his son's for the rest of that day. After dinner he lay down on the sofa thinking heavily ; he neither spoke a word with his mother nor picked up a book. He had answered too easily all the questions life had offered him. Was it too late to begin thinking clearly now ? Were his conclusions correct by accident or were all his conclusions mere self-flattery ? No formula to help him through the mists of doubt which were swarming round him came his way. Late that night, when *shool* and the evening *meyeriv* service were over, he walked out towards Baxter's Hill, under the light of stars. It was not long that he moved onward like a sluggish water. A wind came from somewhere afar off and set into motion the mists in his head. More and more quickly they whirled within him, and then,

swiftly, they were gone. He rose skywards from his feet. Without pain or pleasure, all that issue which had racked him this day became thin, remote. He moved on the shores of a sea where the sands were stars, and the sea was the great womb of the undefined, where all things were not, but God was. Trembling, aghast, he stood on the arch of the sweep of sands, hearing incoherent murmurings. Towards a blackness cool and clear he stood where foam and wind beat into his face. He turned from the voices of sea and bent down dabbling his fingers among the star-sands. He rose and walked stepping from rock to rock to the channel where the Milky Way flowed inward from the sea. On the bank of the Milky Way, he stopped once more and lifted in his hands a handful of grass. Beyond the slope, the dim waters of Mitchen moved through the night. He leaned for some minutes drowsing against a tree trunk, then turned towards the vague hulk of Baxter's Hill. "It's over!" he whispered. "I know!"

CHAPTER X

IT was noon on the Day of Atonement which followed nine days after the *Rosh Hashonah* memorable to more than one by the oration of Reb Monash, noon in Cambridge Street, a thoroughfare in Doomington far removed from the region of the synagogues, which, for this day, were crowded from dawn to dusk by the day-long worshippers. The most pious did not move from within their precincts; the less pious withdrew occasionally to the immediate environs. All who were sacrilegious on all the other three hundred and sixty-four days, on this day rigidly fasted, and, having no regular pew in a regular synagogue, were devoutly glad to pay for the privilege of any pew in any synagogue. If they gainsaid or were indifferent to the precepts of their faith on other days, who could forswear the immemorial terror of this day? If they had been building all the year a palisade between Heaven and themselves, on this day, who knew, they might enter Heaven through a breach in the palisade. On the night concluding *Yom Kippur* many looked forward to the impieties of the morrow as if these had been annulled in anticipation. But most felt that if all else were *démodé*, *Yom Kippur* stood august beyond fashion. Even the great jewellery and general emporia of Doomington shut their doors, though they exhibited a note to the effect that cleaning operations were in progress, so that their credit with their more

Nonconformist customers might remain unimpaired. Bob Cohen, who lived with a *goyah*, a Gentile lady, all the year round, became entirely oblivious of her existence for these twenty-four hours, in a synagogue several towns away from the scene of his amour. In *shool* his fervent contrition was only drowned by the self-reproaches of the penitents whose perpetual state was the strictest matrimonial chastity. Avowed atheists put in an appearance despite all their logic. There were few Jews in Doomington that day beyond the circumference of a circle whose radius was half a mile in any direction from the *Polisher Shool*.

Hence it was surprising to see Alec Segal in a shop doorway far up Cambridge Street on the afternoon of *Yom Kippur*. It added to the surprise to find Harry Sewelson join him after some minutes, for the four parents of these youths, emancipated to the pitch of transferring a kettle to and from the fire on *shabbos*, were yet very far from the transgression of this ultimate sanctity ; a sanctity of such awe as might overwhelm spirits even of the defiant aloofness of Segal and Harry.

"You're late!" said Segal.

"Three minutes!"

"Six and a half to be precise!"

"You'll be taking notes of how long your neck's in the noose before you're dead. . . ."

"Yes, and make a graph of the parabola of my descent. But why *are* you late? Called in at a public-house *en route*?"

"No fear! I've had a drink at the scullery-tap, it was a little less ostentatious. I suppose you've had a drink?"

"Yes, I hid a bottle of lemonade in my mattress!" declared Segal cunningly.

"I'm not thirsty but I'm jolly peckish. My elder sister fainted, so I had to take her home. As for Esther—you know, my other sister—she's only fifteen, but she's dead nuts on fasting. Queer thing, the less she puts down the more she brings up! She's been sick all day!"

"But that young scoundrel's not turned up yet! I wonder if anything's wrong?"

"He's all right. His father doesn't stir a foot out of the *Polisher Shool*; he'll have had an opportunity to prig something to eat and drink!"

"I don't think he can have backed out?" Segal suggested.

"I don't think it's likely. He may be walking backward to draw attention away from his bowler hat. He doesn't like bowler hats!"

"Or he may be writing a poem in a dark corner, being only young and somewhat foolish. He'll grow out of the first as time goes on."

"Yes, he's amusing enough. But isn't that the illustrious bowler hat?"

"Hello! Here we are! I say, bowler hat, have you seen Philip Massel?"

"He's just coming!" said Philip, appearing at last. "Well, he's come! I'm starving, where's the shop?"

"You've been at a banquet with Sir Timothy and the City Fathers; else why so late?" insisted Harry.

"My mother was fearfully faint," replied Philip awkwardly. "I didn't like to leave her. It's a crime for her to fast, she's so weak nowadays! It's not been so bad for me, with some packets of biscuits at home and a copy of Milton for *shool*. But let's come along!"

The boys walked up Cambridge Street and turned to the right towards a bridge over the Deadwater Canal.

They passed through the door of an eating-house and the fat smells of frying enveloped them unpleasantly ; they chose a table in a corner and sat before a lake of spilled gravy and the tin utensils.

"It feels rather shifty, all this !" ventured Philip after a few moments.

"Look here, lad, don't be conscientious at this time of day !" remonstrated Segal.

"I mean when you think of the old men and the sick women who're a sight worse off than we are !"

"Now, Philip," interposed Harry, "You know quite well it's not the beastly food. It's a symbol of freedom ! We're not going to be enslaved any longer under the heel of these daft old superstitions. *Vive la liberté* and all that sort of thing ! I positively don't feel like eating now, as a matter of fact ; the stink's rather thick. You know, Alec, you might have chosen something more encouraging than this hole."

"Phew !" from Philip. "I prefer the smell of the *Polisher Shool* !"

"We can't afford anything better. I should have preferred the New Carlton myself, I admit !"

"There'd be too many Jews there ! It would be too public !" Harry affirmed.

"Well, young fellers," said a dishevelled lady at this stage, "wot are ye going to 'ave ? Say it slick !"

"Ham and eggs all round !" said Segal lordlily.

"Righto !" The lady was bustling off.

"Hold on !" Philip shouted after her concernedly.

"What's the matter with you, cock ?"

"What else have you got ? I won't have ham !"

"What about fish and fried, saucy ?"

"Thank you !" Philip muttered gratefully.

"What do you mean by it ?" exclaimed Harry

indignantly. "What do you want to spoil the show for?"

"You can call me a blooming prig, if you like, and be blowed! I think ham's overdoing it, that's all! It's not playing the game!"

"Don't be a kid! What's your objection to the miserable animal? I thought you'd got over all that!"

"I thought so too, but I think a chap can choose another sort of day for ham! What's the good of piling it on like this?"

"Do you mean," asked Harry, "that you've just shoved your head out of the burrow of superstitions, like a rabbit, and are going to dive down again, scared? I thought you were more consistent than that. Personally I should prefer beef, but I'm sacrificing my inclinations precisely because ham is a symbol."

"It's not a symbol! I call it cheek!"

"Cheek my fat aunt! You're finking it!"

"You can say what you like! You can stuff your own mouth with the muck! I'm not going to choke for your sake!"

"But what of all your wonderful talk about freedom and advancing with the new race," Segal asked quietly, "and all the good old moonshine?"

"I just think, if you want a symbol, fried fish on *Yom Kippur* is as useful as ham. It's what d'you call it? it's irreverent somehow, insisting on ham! Yes, that's it! It's irreverent!"

"It's certainly expensive!" declared Segal with an air of finality. When the food came at last, the three boys hardly touched either ham or fish. They had, at least, stood up for the principle of emancipation! And ham, moreover, is a difficult commodity between unaccustomed jaws.

"It's time I got back!" said Philip, at the point where Cambridge Street merged into more familiar territory. "He'll be getting restive about me!"

"There's a comet in the offing!" declared Segal. "To-morrow night?"

"To-morrow night, and let your ham rest quiet in your bellies!"

Philip, after entering the *Polisher Shool*, spent a little time with his mother, not yet being of an age when a masculine presence raised perturbation in the women's section. When he advanced towards his own seat, his father frowned a question upon him. "*Nu*, and where so long?"

"I've been feeling sick!" Philip replied truthfully.

"Sit thee down then and open thy *machzer*! It is at this place one holds! Omit thou no word!"

"I hope you are feeling all right, *tatte*?"

"How should I feel? 'Tis well with me!"

Around his head the chanting and the weeping gathered volume. The voice of Mr. Herman on the pulpit was choked with crying and his usual ornamentations were now wholly absent from his delivery. The hands of Mr. Linsky thundered contrition. The face of Reb Yonah was drenched in tears. To Philip it seemed that the voices of all these moaning, swaying men had been lifted for age beyond age. It was as if he stood in a dark country where large boulders stood greyly from the uneven ground; the air was full of lamentations; the sky was compact with lightless cloud. If but the dome were rifted, if but through that blue division there came among these boulders and this lamentation the sharp shaft of wind—the boulders would subside into sand, there would be no lamentation; there would

be flowers in green hollows, and water in willowy places ; if but the dome were rifted, if but a wind blew. . . ."

Philip was tired of vain imaginings. As long prayer succeeded long prayer, the tedium of the day gripped him. He remembered the *Milton* in his pocket and, with a thrill of dangerous delight, drew it forth carefully. Oh, it was important to take the utmost care ! Good Lord, if he were found out, what on earth would happen ? Could anything happen proportionate to the crime ? His *machzer*, fortunately, was a large, protective book ! He leaned the *Milton* against its yellow pages and turned stealthily to "Comus." Was there any poetry like "Comus" in the world ? What savour it gained from contact with these present sights and sounds ! How fair was the lady, and how the rhymes were like bells at morning !

Enraptured he turned page upon page of "Comus." "Comus" was ended. Reb Monash was shaking in his corner there, by the Ark, his face pale with the fast. All was safe. He turned to "Allegro" and "Penseroso." Never had he known poetry to taste so fresh, like cheese and fine bread among the hills. He turned to the "Ode on the morning of Christ's Nativity."

*See how from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet. . . .*

What lines were these, flawless in music, divinely simple !

The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet. . . .

How much loveliness in how little space ! "Star-led," the exquisite phrase ! . . . "Star-led" . . . Now to the "Hymn ! . . ."

But a law of gravitation greater than he might under-

stand brought his eyes from his book, bent backward his head, lifted his eyes into the eyes of his father staring down from above upon his book.

Then Philip realized blindingly the significance of this moment :

*. . . The son of heaven's eternal King,
Of wedded Maid and Virgin Mother born. . . .*

and once more,

*. . . The heaven-born Child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies. . . .*

Into the inmost centre of the very heart of his father's faith, the faith of those innumerable dead who for the many centuries had looked upon this day as the climax of their childhood in Jehovah, upon this *Yom Kippur* whose mere utterance was a fear and a great light, into the synagogue's self, at the very doors of the Holy Ark where lay the Law pregnant with history, he had introduced . . . the "wedded Maid," the "heaven-born Child" . . . !

Down from his father's eyes it seemed that two actual shafts of flame descended into his own eyes, burning like an acid through the pupils beyond the sockets, into the grey stuff of his brain. A sweat stood upon Philip's forehead, and a chill then seemed to hold it there, like a circle of ice. The fire in his father's eyes shrivelled ; there came a hollow shadow of unutterable pain ; a sigh fell weakly from his lips. He staggered towards the door for air.

He returned and said, "My son, throw it away, throw thyself away ! Let me not see thee again !"

Philip hid the book among the dilapidated Prayer Books at a corner of the women's section and returned

to his *machzer*. Not once did his father's eye meet his own during the rest of the day. When Reb Monash and his wife were proceeding homewards after the fast and Philip made a movement as to accompany them, Reb Monash stared with cold eyes and motioned him to stand away.

The end had come. Channah sitting with wet eyes on a corner of the sofa knew it. Mrs. Massel in the scullery lifting her apron to her eyes and sobbing ever so quietly knew it. Philip in the darkness of the empty *chayder* with his head between his hands knew it. Reb Monash knew it, breaking his fast in the kitchen, saying not a word.

The next morning Reb Monash turned to Mrs. Massel. Philip was in the room. "He must go somewhere! He cannot sleep here to-night! He has broken me, let him not stay to laugh in my face!"

"What can he do? Where can he go?"

"I know not! He must go!" There was no doubting the finality of his command.

Not a word passed between Philip and his father. Mrs. Massel dared not trust herself to utter a sound until Reb Monash had gone upstairs for his afternoon nap.

"*Nu*, Feivele," she ventured then, "seest thou what has befallen us? God knows I have not too many years to see thee in . . . and now this black year! *Schweig den, schweig*, Feivel! What shall be with us?"

Channah realized that it lay with her to take the initiative.

"Mother," she urged, "all will be well! You mustn't upset yourself like this! The thing we've to talk about now is what we're going to do with Philip!"

"Yes, what?" Philip asked helplessly.

"We've understood for a long time it was going to end up like this, there was nothing else for it. We were talking about it only last week. She said . . ."

"Who said, Channah? Who do you mean?"

"I mean Dorah! She said you were wasting the old man to a shadow and she was going to put a stop to it, for father's sake and everybody else's!"

"Wasting to a shadow! What about mother?"

"I know! But I didn't say anything! You know what it's like to argue with Dorah! But she was going to see father about it, sooner or later, and now that this has happened . . . well, we'd best go and see her at once!"

"Not one word didst thou say to me!" complained Mrs. Massel.

"It's bad enough now we've got to; what dost thou want more, *mutter*?"

"Oh, but what are you driving at, Channah? What's the idea?"

"She's going to put up a bed for you in her back-room. Benjamin keeps a lot of stock there now, but they can put a little under your bed and the rest on the landing. You can pay her so much a week while your scholarship lasts, and if you don't get another, well, she says you'll just have to go in for tailoring or something; or Benjamin can take you on his rounds."

"Oh, hell!" groaned Philip.

There had never been much sympathy between his elder sister Dorah and himself. Although the fact was rarely referred to among the Massels, Reb Monash and his wife were already a widower and a widow respectively when they were married, Reb Monash bringing Dorah, and Mrs. Massel Channah, to the union. Their only children were Rochke, who died so tragically on the exodus of the family from Russia,

and Philip, born some time later in Doomington. The common parent between Dorah and Philip, therefore, was Reb Monash, and the long conflict between the father and son had rendered less and less substantial the affection between the brother and sister. Dorah, a tall, squared-jawed angular woman, was in some ways more masculine and more forbidding than Reb Monash, and in all ways more evident to the eye in her Longton household than her demure husband, Benjamin, whose main concerns in life were his wife's temper and the state of his samples. From time to time she had startled Philip with sudden spurts of generosity, but these had become increasingly rarer during the last two years.

"There's no way out of it!" asserted Channah. "And, after all, mother, it's only twenty minutes' walk away. Besides, there's the tram up Blenheim Road!"

The three made their appearance before long at Dorah's. They found her already in possession of the main facts, as she had sent Benjamin down that morning to find out how the family was feeling after the fast and Benjamin had met Reb Monash proceeding to Longton. They had both accepted the hospitality and the lemon-tea of Mr. Levine, the *parnass*, who had ushered them in from the door of his furniture shop. Benjamin had rendered his report duly.

With Channah, Dorah was monosyllabic. Philip she ignored.

"From where he takes this godlessness, *mutter*," she said in Yiddish, "I understand not! A *shkandal* it is, over the whole neighbourhood!"

"He is growing older, he will understand more. *Folg mir*, Dorah, he will be a good Jew yet!"

"Would that one saw the least sign! I have made

his bed for him, with a *perinny* on top and a *perinny* below. He will be comfortable ! ”

“ Oh, mother, don’t ! ” broke in Channah. “ Don’t ! It’s not far from Angel Street ! You’ll be able to see her every day after school, won’t you, Philip ? ”

“ Yes ! ” said Philip thickly, “ Every day ! He’ll be sleeping ! ”

Dorah turned to Philip for the first time. “ Well, you’d best go home and get your things ready ! Will you want to bring all those books ? ”

“ I must have my books ! ”

“ He can take away the bookcases I made for them ! ” declared Mrs. Massel. “ The books will not be in thy way ! ”

“ *Loz shen zein !* Let it be, then ! Well, he will need a handcart. Our greengrocer has one. I’ll send him down at eight o’clock ! ”

A miserable drizzle was falling as Philip gathered the collection of books he so much prized and placed them on the dirty brown sacking of the handcart. Angel Street was more dark and wretched than the Angel Street of any of his memories. His mother stood on the doorstep forlornly, coughing heavily now and again in the rain and wind. He had laid the soap-box bookcases she had made for him over his books and the man was securing the whole load under a final layer of sacking with coils of coarse rope.

“ I’m going now, mamma ! ” He kissed her drawn face.

“ Go, my little one ! ”

As the cart splashed over the greasy setts of Angel Street through the damp darkness, she still stood watching, rain in her hair and soaking her blouse. Slightly she lifted her hands towards the receding boy.

He looked back and saw her still standing there. He came back swiftly and covered her face with kisses. But as he again withdrew, again she stood there empty. Whither did her lorn figure bring back his mind? Whither? Somewhere long ago, far off! Then he remembered. He remembered his image of her alone in the Russian darkness, when the dead child had been taken from her arms. She had stood there empty as now . . . But the handcart was lurching round into Doomington Road. . . .

BOOK III

APHRODITE

CHAPTER XI

SUCH then was the spiritual adolescence of Philip Massel, and such, as lately described, the situation which was its inevitable result—a result not wholly unforeseen by one or two minor characters in the drama of his boyhood. In some senses the intellectual was the more spectacular element of his development; but the budding of his physical faculties, the suffusion of all his blood with sex, proceeded pauselessly through this troubled time. The strands of growth are, of course, inextricably intertwined, and this account has followed too rigidly the threads of Philip's spiritual history. It must return, therefore, to a phase which only by a little space followed the emergence of Socialism above Philip's horizon, and by a little space preceded that episode with Bertha which demonstrated his curious simplicity.

We turn then to a budding in Doomington Road. A group straggle within and without the rays of a lamp which illuminates a corner formed by Walton Street and the road itself. There is much tittering, a little whispering, and a youth raucously is singing!

*Press your lips on my lips,
Your dear little, queer little, shy lips.*

It was only ten minutes ago that Policeman Pig-nob (as he is derisively termed) passed this way, with basest intentions upon Aphrodite.

It is nought to him whether there be a gathering together for the mere barren breeding of money or for a far holier purpose—the ultimate propagation of an antique race. Any gathering together at any street corner suggests to him disrespect towards the corpulent Doomington abstraction who is the Chief Constable, and is liable to be misinterpreted as an incipient movement against the Monarchy and Balmoral, (which he inaccurately places in the Strand near the lofty pillar where Cleopatra stands with a blind eye and a cocked hat looking towards the City Temple; for Policeman Pig-nob is a Free Churchman and to him the City Temple is almost unsurpassed in sacredness by the Chief Constable's detached villa itself or His Britannic Majesty's Balmoral). It is, I have recorded, but ten minutes ago that Policeman Pig-nob passed this way and dispersed the Aphrodisiac gathering. The males folded their tents like the Arabs and as silently stole away. The females, having ascertained even so soon the Sanctuary which is their flesh, stood their ground. Imagine, therefore, their horror when Policeman Pig-nob, not merely with policiary rudeness, shone his bull's-eye into their faces, (decorated in two cases with pink face-powder and in one with mauve), but, forsooth, pulled the admired hair of one of their number; and not, finally, Janey's hair or Ethel's or Lily's somewhat skimpy hair, but, I adjure you, Edie's very hair! Edie's! The lovely thick brown hair of the Queen of Walton Street! Not that Janey, Ethel, Lily and their attendant virgins were not madly jealous of Edie and her positively cattish success with the boys, but really . . . the rights of the sex. . . . Policeman Pig-nob

. . . Edie . . . and, as the most recent immigrant from Russia betrayed herself into exclaiming . . . "*a chalery soll im nemen!* a cholera should him take!"

As silently, as swiftly as they had faded, the boys re-entered the fiery joint circle of Love and the Walton Street lamp. Edie stood picturesquely sobbing in the shadowed doorway of a shop. Over her Harry Sewelson stood proud guard, awaiting the moment when a silk-handkerchief, requisitioned from the paternal establishment, might plead for him a devotion which her tears but cemented like glue. In this direction too the heart of Philip Massel yearned sickly, albeit Ethel was murmuring seductively to him "dear little, queer little, shy lips!"

For the time of the budding of Philip Massel had come; yet even in his budding Philip was fastidious. It was no use, he decided. He could not bud and burgeon towards Ethel. This very decision seemed to make Ethel ache the more intensely towards the stimulation by Philip of her own florescence. You could not avoid kissing Ethel amid the permutations and combinations of Shy Widow and Postman's Knock, particularly as she tenderly called for you to join her in the lobby's darkness much more frequently than you called for her. This was most particularly the case at her own birthday party, when out of sheer animal gratitude for the smoked salmon sandwiches you received from her hands—well, what else could you be expected to do? But, alas, when you kissed Ethel, you could not fail to notice how frequently the nose of Ethel assaulted either your left or your right cheek.

But as for Edie—ah, do not speak of Edie! For her nose, by some miraculous diaphaneity or impalpability of love, seemed dimly, if at all, existent when the felicity of kissing Edie came your way—too rare felicity,

for who but Harry Sewelson hulked before you on that faint, fair road to Edie ?

If the expression may be allowed, at first Philip did not bud enthusiastically. Once more his intellectual timidity asserted itself ; particularly when Harry, whose interest in girls had declared itself somewhat suddenly, very completely and some months ago, had attempted to convince Philip by cogent intellectual argument that the time had arrived for the widening of Philip's sphere of interest. Philip had as yet been aware of little physical encouragement and less emotional. And it seemed an act of deliberate malice on the part of Providence, an act calculated to arrest abruptly for a period of time his "widening" (until such time as the gathered forces would break sharply through the crust of distaste), that, first of feminine contacts, brought Ethel's nose into collision with Philip's cheek. No act of quixotry towards a promptly smitten lady could impel Philip to turn the other. It was fortunate, therefore, that Edie's lips made their appearance to obscure this nasal disquietude. And with Edie's lips, suddenly there came to Philip a knowledge of something softer than flowers and more fragrant than any breath in a garden after rain. Her hair covered her with a warmth and her hands were at once soft and nimble. She said little, for she had little to say, but she disposed her innumerable wares with such naive artifice that she suggested calm deep wells into which her bucket rarely dipped. She was, in fact, a plump and pretty little girl, alluring, secret, a little conceited. She realized with pleasure the vague suggestion of unholiness contained in any relation with the atheistic Harry, but she observed, flattered, with what immediacy Harry usurped her for his own when he stormed the citadel of Walton Street and ousted her other lovers

with the flick of a cynical tongue. With premature womanishness she was conscious of the piquant contrast the figure of Harry afforded beside her own: the hard acute angles—the curves; the eloquent tongue—the tongue more enchanting in its silences than in its speech; the grey, quick eyes—the indeterminate brown; the lips whose kisses were incisions of steel—the lips which were like night, sweet, odorous.

On the recommendation of Harry, an invitation to Janey's birthday party was sent to Philip. The problem of a birthday present troubled him less than on his previous and first visit to such a ceremony, the occasion upon which he had met and conquered Ethel; for then, even after he had included a bottle of Parma Violet Scent with a box where he had glued seven halfpenny coins in a quaint design on the inner side of the lid, he had been perturbed lest he had not used sufficient halfpennies for real generosity. At Janey's birthday party, however, all such considerations had been drowned in a fortuitous kiss he had bestowed on Edie. (It had been a game which had lasted till every possible combination had been exhausted and each pair of female lips knew every pair of male).

But it was rare that these successful and unsuccessful adolescent amours knew the shelter of four walls—birthday parties were as infrequent as they were splendid. Hence it was that the corner of Walton Street each evening saw the gathering of adolescents, in which behold Philip included, criminally weaned for a time, I grieve to say, from the Anabasis and even impaired in his adherence to Karl Marx. And if Reb Monash inquired "Why so late?" or "Whither going?" and Philip answered "The Library!" it had been true at least on two occasions upon which he had made that reply. The epoch of street-corner flirtation had set in,

and among strange, misty places went the wits of Philip woolgathering.

Alec Segal looked on aloof, amused. He had much eloquence, introspective and extraspective, at his command. Yet there was none of the Walton Street ladies concerning whom he wove garlands of words. If the development of his adolescence was impressed upon his conscious mind, and it was unlikely that he had not been mentally tabulating all his states as they succeeded each other, he had made no verbal comments to his younger friends. When Harry was found embroiled in the passages-at-arms of which Walton Street was the witness, Alec was interested and looked wise. When Philip fought weakly and fell in these same encounters, Alec still remained silent, but a shade of the sardonic settled more fixedly on his lips.

The whole of this new development was chaotic, obscure, a blind impulsion towards new things somewhat alien from his other loyalties—if Edie's lips were not to be taken, as in his equivocal poetic mind he tended to take them, as the fruit of the tree of poesy. With a little discomfort he would observe from time to time Alec Segal standing thin and cryptic at the outskirts of the Walton Street *mêlée*; standing there for one moment or two as if he were biding his time, and then behold, Alec was no more there.

"Alec!" he would demand, "Why do you come tip-toeing in like that? It gives a chap the creeps! If you come, can't you stay a bit, and if you can't stay, why on earth do you come? You're like a family ghost creeping about corridors and grinning from the battlements. You're a grisly beast, Alec!"

Alec would rub his left forefinger along the curved line of his nose.

"Nothing, my son! I'm just waiting!"

"Waiting for what?"

"Oh, I don't know! Everything's waiting, so am I! What's the moon waiting for when she stops short at midnight? I'm just waiting! Some of us are made to keep on moving, like Harry, for instance, and some of us to wait! But don't question your grandfather! It's disrespectful!"

One evening Harry, Alec and Philip were walking down the lonely track called Chester Street which led beyond the police station, through dark fields barren of buildings, into Blenheim Road. They were proceeding from a party which had been undiluted misery to Philip and had given, therefore, at least so much food for interested analysis to Alec. Even Harry was subdued. The party had been a thorough failure. Edie had lost her forfeit and had been requested to kiss the boy she liked best in the room. There was a breathless quiet as with downcast eyes she halted a moment and then walked demurely towards the face of the nincompoop, George something-or-other. He was not even a scholar of a Doomington higher school. He was, it was rumoured, attached to the "job and fent" line. He had lank black hair greasily retreating in equal mass from an undeviating central line. His cheeks were, it was true, very silky. His mouth was endurable. But, indisputably, he was a boob. What if his father *was* a master tailor? After all, there are higher social grades than master tailorhood; even if the mere fact of a scholarship does not put you secure above all considerations of social status. And Edie had kissed George.

It was, of course, a deadly snub for Harry; but how much more deadly for Philip, who immediately before

had himself been obliged to kiss the girl he liked best in the room, and had proceeded with ardent shyness to his lady's throne and the uninterested lips of Edie.

"There's no idealism in them at all!" reflected Harry bitterly. "I don't think they know what love means! Here's a chap ready to sacrifice his shirt for them, a chap many girls would jump at! And then what happens? A dolt with sleek hair turns up, and a Cheshire grin, and they're round his neck and licking his feet! It isn't only that they've got no taste—you know. They've got no self-respect!"

"Be more explicit, Harry!" Alec interposed. "Don't shirk the issue—and Edie!"

"They're all the same—absolutely ungrateful and heartless! I'm going to be a monk, a Trappist, I think! Trappism's a profession invented specially for me!"

"What? Because a little minx . . ."

"Don't. . ."

"Don't be a fool, Harry; you said they were all the same! I agree. Why are you specially put out about Edie then? You didn't object to the beefy arm of Lily wandering round George's waist, did you?"

"Not a scrap of difference—Lily's beefy arm, Edie's beefy soul . . .!"

"Look here!" Philip broke in miserably. "It's no good slanging her. I suppose if she likes him better she's entitled to be *his* girl instead of somebody else's."

"A little raw, Philip?" Alec asked.

"Of course I'm not! I don't care what she does! I didn't notice her all evening!"

"Oh, you liar!"

"You looked glum enough when she chose that fellow, didn't you?" taunted Harry.

"Headache, I suppose! And even if I *did* look glum, and I don't say I did—you needn't rub it into a chap. Besides, in any case, I didn't look glum!"

"Your logic's masterful as usual, Philip!"

"The point is not Philip's logic but the heartlessness of women!" Harry insisted. "What's to be done about it?"

"The only thing to be done about it," declared Alec, "is to look the fact in the face, that's all! You must have no illusions about them! You must stare them straight in the eyes and beyond! Let 'em know they're not deceiving you with their little tricks! Strip off the illusions, I say!"

"I suppose by 'illusions' you mean," said Philip, "all that's jolly about 'em and make 'em different from us! No, it won't work!"

"There isn't anything different about us! We're all alike! Strip them naked and it's just—Body, Sex!"

"What on earth are you driving at now?" Philip asked, frightened.

"Only this—that it's about time you . . . Hello! Look here! What on earth . . . what on earth's this?"

They had come to the darkest part of Chester Street. Alec's foot had stumbled against something large and soft. The boys stopped. Harry lit a match and they saw a bundle before them wrapped in a white sheet. It was large and bulky and tied at the top in loose knots.

"What is it?" Philip asked.

"Washing, perhaps?" Alec speculated.

"Open it!" Harry demanded peremptorily. "It might be anything!"

"What shall we do with it? Perhaps it's something dropped from a removal cart, eh?" wondered Alec. "But I hardly think so, it's lying so steadily on its bottom, as if it had been put there deliberately. I think we'd best take it along . . . Hello! Listen! I say! It's *crying*! Good God, can you hear?"

"Get out of the way, Alec!" Harry exclaimed, "Don't stand theorizing!" He bent down and untied the knots swiftly. "Light up!" he commanded, pushing his matches into Philip's hand.

Harry uttered a startled cry.

"A baby!"

"Ye gods, a baby!"

And in truth, wrapped in a blanket and lying in a soft heap in a clothes-basket, a minute baby lay, whining feebly and curling its infinitesimal fingers.

"The kid'll die of cold! We must get it out of the way at once!"

"Not a day old!" Alec mused.

"Get a move on, for God's sake! Where shall we take it?"

"The police-station just along!" Philip suggested.

"Yes, the very place!" Harry took off his great-coat and placed it over the top of the basket. "Here, Alec, take hold of the other handle!"

The baby was delivered into the hands of an inspector, summoned by a policeman who refused to have anything to do with the case. The inspector scrutinized the three lads suspiciously, as if he were ready to believe that one or the other of them was the father of the child. They made their statement and at length, reluctantly, he allowed them to withdraw.

"By Heaven!" muttered Harry, "What a swine the man is!"

"Who do you mean?" asked Alec, who, now that

the practical matter had been discharged and they were once more entering the immaterial world of thought, reassumed the elderliness of his voice and manner. "Who do you mean, vague youth, is a swine? The inspector?"

"No! The father!"

"Yes, I'm with you! But what about the mother?"

"Fancy a mother behaving like that!" Philip wondered.

"That's just what I mean! The woman behaved perfectly naturally. Parents only keep their children because other people do. They're not really interested in children. My parents are not interested in me and I'm not fearfully interested in them. It's only a sort of crust of habit, and the parents of this child wouldn't allow it to form. John Smith and Mary Brown, let's call them. I declare that John Smith and Mary Brown are just natural and sensible people—they had their fling—Body, Sex! That's to-night's party and John Smith and Edie and the baby in the cradle all reduced to their elements! Body, Sex! It's as simple as an equation in Algebra!" (Alec invariably ended his ratiocinations with a flick of the fingers—a 'so easy, you know!')

The incident had filled Harry with nausea. The disillusionment at the party, the check to his pride it had involved, the callous abandonment of the child in the bare croft, had combined to produce in him an indignation of cynicism.

"You're right!" he declared. "It's Sex, pure and simple! It's all dirt!"

"And you, Philip?"

"What do I know about it? Go on!"

Philip listened, fascinated and repelled. At least the philosophy of Segal offered a coherent explanation of

to-night and the other nights. The whole theme was virgin to him, but the method of attack was so deadly calm, so impersonal, that he was impelled to follow. He was conscious, moreover, that other people, not least Harry and Alec, did not exclude this branch of life from their horizon; why, then, should he? It was all so different from the filth of Angel Street; here, if soul played no part or little in this interpretation, mind at least was not absent. There was, he did not dare to confess to himself, a quaint furtive pleasure in it all. . . .

"Go on!" he said, breathless to advance, and half-inclined to flee.

Alec Segal talked. For one hour, two hours, they paced from corner to dark corner of Chester Street. There were but few interruptions from Harry and none from Philip. Only, as Alec talked, Philip felt sometimes that he would like to lie down on the cold kerb to cry—simply, childishly, to cry. And he felt creeping round him like a mist, a deadlier loneliness than had ever beset his heart, a loneliness that now crept and eddied through his being in chill wisps. Oh for the brown eyes of his mother, so innocent and so wide with knowledge! For the bloom was fading from the world; the freshness was passing away. Friendship was passing away. Hitherto he had stood alone, self-sufficient. Now the new preoccupations must assail him, wean him from his old friends. Wean him, oh sorrowful, oh, surely false, from his mother! Lead him towards insubstantial things waiting somewhere to hold him! And these things reached towards his friends, were interposed between them and him. They had been complete and single once, these friends, despite all the flaws in their unity. They were but provisional and dependent now, as he was himself to be henceforward.

Pain which had a core of delight, delight which was gilded dust!

The three youths parted. As they moved in different ways, night, it seemed to Philip, engulfed them separately bringing unbridgeable division. Night swallowed something of boyhood. Manhood came stalking towards Philip out of the vast. Manhood placed a finger on his young forehead. A sad boy slept that night in Angel Street, sad and wise.

CHAPTER XII

DORAH was a tall, raw-boned woman, carrying all the implicit angles of Reb Monash to an explicit extreme. In the civil strife at Angel Street her sympathy had always been on the side of tradition and Reb Monash, as against licence and Philip. Channah likewise had, in a weak and somewhat hopeless way, taken sides. Not openly, not with unabashed self-declaration, and far less through philosophy than sentiment, she had been steadily at Philip's side—when, at least, she was not absorbed in her collection of Vesta Tilley post cards and her long waitings at gallery doors for the performances of Lewis Waller or Martin Harvey.

The veins of Dorah's temper were less easily tapped than Reb Monash's, but when tapped, they yielded richer ore. When her temper was at its most exuberant, her voice was of a dove's stillness which boded much woe. But the contradiction in her household which most concerned Philip was, in a word, weak tea. So well defined and dark and abrupt was Dorah, that one would have imagined that tea of her brewing would be raven as Acheron. Yet it was, in fact, as weak as a rickety child. It was tepid. It was served in a large pint mug, so that its quantity the more ruthlessly exposed the invariable defects of its quality. Much and cold milk annihilated its last semblance to the potent brews of Angel Street and copious sugar rendered it, at length, unpleasant as an inverse castor oil.

Compare with weak tea, tea almost leonine ; also cherries in the skim of milk, and Mrs. Massel sitting hard by, humming happily like a kettle, or moving about the kitchen with happy bird-like noises, and producing finally a remnant of Saturday's *kuggel* (which is a thick brown soft pudding with many raisins and a celestial crisp crust) ! . . . Until the shuffling of Reb Monash's feet overhead might be heard, and there is the last gulping of tea and swallowing of *kuggel*, and the lifting of a laden satchel of books, and from Philip's lips a fatuous "So long, old mother, toodle-oo!" which is a valediction juvenile indeed from the lips of a young man to whom at last the secrets of the universe have been laid bare, from the genesis of the baby to the real nature of God and the perfidy of Edie. . . .

"So long, old mother!"

Since the exodus from Angel Street, relations between Philip and his father had not been clearly defined. Philip still descended from Longton each Saturday morning to accompany Reb Monash to the *Polisher Shool*. He had at first been extremely reluctant to go, but Dorah threatened unstated oppressions, and though tea could hardly have been more pallid, Philip felt it wise to fall in with her request. He still came down to join in festival meals, but no word of intimacy passed between them. In *shool*, the watchful eye of Reb Monash no longer guarded Philip's Prayer Book lest two pages be turned over in place of one ; which very remission compelled Philip to reiterate the cryptic prayers with a blank, dull fidelity.

Thus, therefore, though they were on conversational terms with each other, as a man might be with a youth he disliked or feared but in whom he was compelled to take an interest, out of loyalty towards a dead friend,

invariably the awakening of Reb Monash brought about the dissolution of such a cherry-séance as I have spoken of. For Mrs. Massel and her son had now made a tacit pact by which Philip always came home from Doomington School via Angel Street instead of by the upper road to Longton called Brownel Gap. It meant an uninterrupted hour with his mother, and these months, howsoever disastrous and dark the day might be before and after this golden hour, were their halcyon days.

"And yet," apprehensively muttered Philip to himself, "how thin she is getting!"

"Mother!" he would say, "Aren't you well? Can't you take something? You don't look half so—you know—half so fat and jolly as ordinary mothers do. Look at Alec Segal's mother! She adds another chin every month and she keeps on getting further out in front! You don't! What'll we do about it, mother; it can't go on, you know!"

"Channah, God bless her!" she would reply, "out of her hard-earned wages—and you know how much he makes her bring into the house—and then her new dress she's bought for Betsy's wedding, it's all purple like wine, a *par-shane*, that's what the dear girl looks, a beauty straight out of the picture book! Vesta Tilley me thou no Vesta Tilleys! Going on the stage like a boy, smoking cigarettes! But she always wears wigs! Perhaps she wants to make herself out a daughter of Israel, with her wearing wigs! Well, if she ever dresses up like an honest woman, I say Channah's new back comb, even if it hasn't got real diamonds, is just as lovely as Vesta Tilley's! Don't forget the sugar in thy tea, Feivele!"

"Yes, right, mother! But what about Channah, her hard-earned wages?"

“Oh yes! My head, my head! Thou dost not get thy brains from my old silly head, Feivele! *Nu*, where were we! *Yah!* I was saying, out of her hard-earned wages, cod-liver oil she buys me, and sometimes two fresh eggs she buys me! The extravagant girl, two fresh eggs! Make me a poetry out of two fresh eggs! It’s all right making poetry out of trees and rivers! Thou hast ever seen trees and rivers, yes? No! Ah, those were *takke* trees by the Dneister, and that was a river in a thousand! Will I ever smell again the grass in the fields by the river, when they cut it and it lies in heaps, and the moon, it comes up like a feather! This is not for me, Feivele! But when I’m dead, Feivele. . . .”

“No, no, no, mother! Look here, I don’t think you ought to talk like that! It isn’t sensible!”

“I mean over a hundred years—thou shalt see a lot of countries and hills and thou shalt smell the grass cut by the river, maybe thou shalt see even the Dneister! Perhaps my brother Benya’s daughter—she is how many years old, eight, nine—perhaps she will be a *studentka* and thou wilt teach her English and she will teach thee *Russ* and you’ll get married—and thy old mamma, she’ll not be there to see!”

“Mother, it’s not decent of you! You talk like that more and more, I don’t know why, and if you’d only take more care of yourself, you could be the Fat Woman in a show!”

“I’m sorry, son, I’m sorry,” covering up her traces wistfully, “I mean I’ll be over the sea in Angel Street, and you’ll not want to wait till you come to England, thou and Rivkah—yes, yes, Rivkah is her name, God bless her! before you get married!”

Some days later, after another sitting where conversation ranges over continents and stars, and there is no

fatigue in their wings—"Say, mother! here's two more new-laid eggs! I think one's a duck's, does it matter?"

"Oh a *katchky*! A big blue *katchky's* egg! Oh, Feivele, where didst thou——"

"Now don't ask! And anyhow, I've been sick of Longfellow for ages!"

"See, I'll boil it now! There's time before he comes down! Thou wilt have half!"

Stoutly, "Nothing, nothing! It's yours!" The egg is boiled. Sacredly, as if duck-egg-eating were a holy rite, Mrs. Massel eats her duck's egg. Once or twice she throws in fervent appreciations of the race of *katchkies*. Philip half hopes her cheeks will here and now take on a shade more colour from the nourishment he has provided for her out of the disposal of Evangeline. Her face still is pale, and there are still drawn lines at the mouth. Ah well, only wait till she's taken a lot more cod-liver oil and a lot more new-laid eggs, including as many *katchkies* as discarded poets will provide. . . .!

"Feivele, he comes!"

"Humph—ho! I'm going! Oh, look at your hands, how liny and seamy they are! Come, *do* leave those brasses alone, they're so much work! And you know, when you don't clean 'em the only difference is they look like copper instead of brass! Ototototoi! I must be off, I suppose! What fat cherries they were—like babies! Well, you huge bullying monster of a mother, till to-morrow, till to-morrow!"

So the months passed, with their half-surreptitious visits to Mrs. Massel, which gained something of their too short delight from their shallow secrecy. At the extremes of the day, there were, on the one hand, school, on the other hand, Walton Street. At school he

generally maintained an unambitious head above the waters, still fitfully persecuted by his fellows, or ignored, or dimly tolerated as one who took no interest in societies, sports and camps, but from whom no positive evil was to be expected, saving sometimes an ugly spurt of temper which did not cringe even before the towering creatures who at all other times carried universal terror in their wake. At the other extreme of the day were the sporadic flirtations in Walton Street which began somewhat to lose their attractions as he moved towards his sixteenth year. There were subfusc rumours about the migration of Alec Segal's family to another town for reasons unspecified. Harry Sewelson became entangled with two barmaids and a German governess successively. The simpering graces of the Edie *ménage*, it is grievous to add, began to wear thinner and thinner, excepting for the grosser souls of a George or a Willy Levi the Barber. Moreover, Philip had received so feeble a move as a consequence of an Edie-deteriorated school year, that he determined violently to regain his academic self-esteem. Of the fact that he became a competitor for the five-pound prize to be awarded to the greatest authority on Chaucer in the middle school at Doomington, Philip had left Dorah unaware. She was ready to expend over him the vials of her maternal love (she had no children) only as soon as he consented to be what she termed "a Jew among Jews." The history of Angel Street had taught her the futility of positive compulsion in this direction. But she placed before her the definite policy of treating Philip in a manner neither hostile nor affectionate, until, maybe, the sheer force of frigidity brought him creeping to the warmth. Whilst Philip had spent all the evening in the pursuit of Edie's lips instead of in the pursuit of a high place in form,

she had merely said nothing. When now till a late hour he began to concern himself with his school work and his tales of Chaucer, she said nothing still, and was told as little. But likewise Philip said nothing to his mother. Suppose, and after all many of his competitors were in senior forms, suppose he should fail badly ! Only Channah was his confidante, and from her he obtained the gift of a certain most desirable complete Chaucer which Cartwright had displayed in his curiosity shop for fruitless months.

Philip still remembered the almost dizzy delight he had occasioned his mother by the winning of a mere form prize as second-in-class two years ago. She still treasured it alongside of her Yiddish translations of Holy Writ, in the most intimate recess of her cupboard. Not a word was intelligible to her, of course ; she was capable even of holding the book upside down. Yet she would carefully wipe her spectacles and proceed to move her eyes in leisurely transports from page to hieroglyphic page. She was so much attached to the book that he had not had the heart to take it away with him on the melancholy handcart which had transported his goods to Longton.

The decision of the Chaucer prize was to be decided an hour after school on a certain day and the official announcement to be made at prayers the following day. In an agony of sick apprehension Philip slunk about the corridors of the school. He was in a state of comatose despair and was staring unseeingly into a case of stuffed beavers and stoats, when a hearty and heavy hand descended on his shoulder.

“ Well, Philip ! ” exclaimed the robust voice of Mr. Furness, “ and who do you think has won the Chaucer prize ? ”

“ Albert Chapman, sir ! ” suggested Philip weakly.

"Try again!"

"Jack Lord, sir!"

"No, my lad! He lives nearer Angel Street than that! Oh, of course, you live in Longton now! How's your sister?"

"You . . . you don't mean *me*, sir?"

"But I do! Come into my room, I've a poet I think you'll like. Henley! You've not met Henley?"

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll!*

Won't your mother be glad, eh? I'm pleased, Philip, very! You're making good again! Let me see, we were quoting Henley. Of course, you remember:

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.*

No? Here's the book then! . . ."

Philip ran to Angel Street breathlessly and burst into the kitchen. Reb Monash had already come down and was sipping his glass of lemon-tea. But Philip had no eyes for Reb Monash.

"Mother!" he shouted, "I've won! I've won the Chaucer! A five-pound prize! Isn't it grand! I'll be able to buy you a blouse for *yom tov*! And hordes of eggs! Isn't it grand!"

She looked towards Reb Monash. He had contracted his forehead.

"Hush!" she said in a thin, even voice. "Thy father has a head this afternoon. Make not so much noise!"

"Don't you understand? I've won an awfully big prize and I've worked so hard for it!" he said, crest-fallen. He had expected she would flush with delight

and seize his hands and lift them to her lips, as she did when she was tremendously pleased with him. Instead, here she was showing no sign of pleasure, hardly of interest.

"It is well!" she said. "But thou must be quiet! Thou wilt have a cup of tea, wilt thou?"

"No!" he muttered, suppressing in his throat a lump of acute disappointment. "I've got to go to Dorah's at once! I promised to do something for her!"

His eyes had a suspicion of dampness when he arrived at Longton. He ate a chilled dinner sullenly.

Next day he had not the heart to go and see his mother. He spent the hour in an alcove of the school library ostensibly reading De Quincey, actually playing a game at that time gathering momentum at Doomington School, the game called "push penny," where two pair of nibs stuck in a table served as goal posts, and two rival pocket knives impelling two rival pennies attempted to introduce a further coin into the respective pen-nib goals. But he turned up in Angel Street as usual the following day. He was sulky. "A nice mother you are . . ." he began. But he had not time to say more. She had seated him beside her on the sofa and was stroking his head. "Feivele, Feivele, didst thou not understand? When he is here, dare I show what I think, how glad I am . . . ?" A fit of coughing interrupted her. The boy looked up anxiously. "Thou knowest," she began again, "thou knowest what he will think, that I encourage thee in they *goyishkeit*. Ah, would that thou wert a holier Jew, my son! It does not matter how far thou wilt go in the world, once a Jew, remain a Jew! Thou wilt have high friends. They will say to thy face 'How thou art wonderful, Mr. Massel!' Is not that true? And behind thee they will murmur 'Jew! Jew!' *Yah, yah*, that is

a long way ahead! Where I shall be, who knows? And now again, what hast thou won? What? No! Not five pounds! For just sitting down and writing for three hours? No, that cannot be! Mr. Furness likes thee, no? It is Mr. Furness, he knows thou art cleverer than all the other boys. . . . ”

“No it wasn’t, mother! He hadn’t anything to do with it!”

“Tell me not! No sane man will give away five pounds because one sits oneself down at a desk and writes words! Ah well, let it be, if thou wilt have it so! . . . But thou must not work so hard, thine eyes . . . Oh, this coughing! I went to the market to buy a hen for *shabbos*. It is cheaper there. And it was raining one of your English rains . . . lakes, it rained!”

“You know, mother, it’s rotten of you! You shouldn’t do it!”

“It will pass, it will pass! But the kettle’s boiling! Tea! And look what I have bought thee, to-day! Cakes with ice, eh? I know how thou art a sweet tooth! Dost thou remember swallowing a whole box of pills because thou thought they were sweets! And how I took thee in this shawl, the red one, to the chemist! And he made thee sick with his finger, and thou bit his hand, thou *yungatsch*! See! It boils over on my clean fender! *Kum shen, kum!*”

The summer examinations followed. For some weeks preceding them, Philip worked hard all day and long into the night. It was during this period that Mrs. Massel took to her bed. Her cough had become heavy and persistent. Philip would come in after school with frightened eyes.

“It will pass, it will pass!” she repeated. He tried to overwhelm in a frenzied absorption in his work the lurking fear which gnawed at his heart-strings. Soon

it was found imperative to move her bed from the upstairs bedroom to the parlour below. The pale thinning face would intervene between him and the page. He would draw back in a sudden access of terror. "It will be all right!" he assured himself, "All the really hot days of summer are to come yet!" One thing at least he could do. He would get a first-rate place in the exams. He knew how that would delight her. He was sure it would help her no end. He thrust himself wholly into his books.

He did so well at the examination that a bursary was awarded him which put his position at school beyond all peril for another two years.

"Mother!" he burst in one day. "Such good news!"

She lifted her head tiredly. "Tell me, my son!"

"I've got a huge scholarship and school's absolutely right now, nothing to fear! Tell me, mother, aren't you horribly excited! Isn't it fine!"

But looking down on her face, he found it wet with tears. An ice-sharp dismay leapt to his heart.

"Mother, aren't you glad? You ought to be laughing! I never expected anything like it! Oh, mother, why on earth are you crying? What's it all about?"

"Thou wilt not understand, Philip! But it is nothing! I'm not really crying! Nothing, nothing! See, my face is dry! Kiss me, Feivele!"

He bent down to her. For an hour he talked to her of the new confidence his success had brought him and what he was going to do when he left school. He might even go to the University! No, he would not be a doctor! His ambitions hadn't taken shape yet, but he might be. . . . Oh, he didn't know what he mightn't be if he only tried! And he'd have such a house for her to live in. . . ."

He fell to describing the house of his dreams . . . until at length Channah came in. She was ending her button-hole labours earlier, nowadays, in order to have more time to attend to her mother.

The summer holidays had already begun when Mr. Furness wrote to Philip informing him that he had made arrangements for the boy to spend a fortnight in the country. It was characteristic of Mr. Furness. He realized that unless he himself engineered it there was no chance of Philip obtaining the holiday the boy seemed badly to need. It was better, he decided, not to broach the matter at all, but by definitely presenting Philip with the *fait accompli*, and by placing himself behind the vantage of the impersonal post, to simplify Philip's position as far as possible. The idea had occurred to him of inviting Philip to the annual Dooming-ton camp among the Westmoreland hills, particularly as the camp regularly contained a fair proportion of the Jewish boys at the school. But the thought of Reb Monash seemed rigidly to disqualify the idea. It was obvious that with the most courteous intentions in the world the ceremonial minutiae of Angel Street could hardly be repeated to their last austerity in the divine welter of camp. He cast about in his mind, therefore, for a means of satisfying at once the scruples of Reb Monash and his own determination that Philip should breathe smokeless air. The Jewish "guest house" kept by Mrs. Kraft under the Wenton Hills seemed as amiable a solution as he could find.

It was run on "strictly *kosher*" lines for boys between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, and ladies over the decorous age of thirty. The determination to avoid complications *du cœur* seemed, he considered, perhaps a little ostentatious. The important point, however, was that Wenton House was at once "*kosher*" and in

the country, and he was satisfied that Mrs. Kraft was a capable and excellent lady.

For one moment only Mr. Furness's letter brought to Philip a wild joy, then the joy flickered and was quenched.

"Absolutely impossible!" he determined. "How can I go and leave her lying ill in the parlour, coughing! I'm not going, that's final!"

But the matter was by no means so easily decided. "Not going!" cried Mrs. Massel. "Not going!" echoed Channah.

"Be thou not a fool, my son!" the mother urged. "How I have yearned it should come to pass for thee! What, a Yiddisher house in the country! Of course thou wilt go! Thou wilt come back a *labe*, a lion, with a big chest, a sight for God and Man! Perhaps there will be a real river there? No? Not like the Mitchen! A river they call it, such a year upon them! Yes, and the men in the fields will be cutting the grass, or is it too soon? The year is slower in this England of thine than in Terkass, but what knows one of the year, how it comes or goes, in thy lovely Dum—ing—tonn!"

"Don't be silly, mother! How on earth can I go when you're like this! I can't! I can't think of it!"

"A question! Thou must go, I say! Annotate for me no passages! *Mirtsaschem*, I'll be well again when thou returnest. I will make thee, all for thyself, a *kuggel* . . . *oi, oi*, this coughing . . . *mishkosheh*, it will pass . . . a large *kuggel*, with large raisins, larger raisins are not!"

"Of course you must go!" broke in Channah, adding her pressure, "Look how hard you've been working with all your Chaucers and things! We'll be having you to look after as well, if you're not careful! And you

know yourself how it'll cheer mother up to think you're in the open air with no worries and nothing to do but get fat! I'll tell you what, I'll give you an extra half-crown—if you promise not to spend it on your smelly old books—and you must go to a farm every morning. . . . ”

But as she went on talking, a shadow, the sensation of a picture rather than a picture itself, established itself in Philip's mind. A figure shrouded, very calm, very cold! Candles fluttering somewhere! Hunched shadows . . . calm . . . cold. . . . !

“I can't go! I can't go!” he shouted suddenly.

“Feivele!” his mother begged. “What is with you? Speak to him, Channah, speak to him!”

“You're a beast, Philip! Look how you're upsetting her! You *must* go! *Emmes adonoi*, the doctor said she's getting on nicely. It's only rest she wants and good food, he said, and no worry. No worry, mind you!”

He looked away from Channah and saw the appeal in his mother's eyes.

“All right, I'll go!” he said heavily.

“Good old lad! The first thing . . . ”

“Look here, Channah!” he interrupted. An idea had suddenly occurred to him. “I'll go on one condition. You must write a note to me every day I'm away, it doesn't matter how small, a post-card if you like! And every day mother must write her name on it, without fail! Promise that!”

Channah looked at him strangely.

“Of course I'll promise! And I'll do it! Won't we, mother?”

“The foolish boy with his poetry-ideas! Of course we will! *Nu, shen, nu*, thou art happy now? He will say to me a poetry, Channah, and thou must go

this moment to boil thyself an egg! Go thou, go, *tochterel!*”

“That’s all right!” murmured Philip. Before him waved green banners of grass towards the foothills, and white clouds sailed aloof over broken peaks. . . . “That’s all right, mother! And if you forget that *kuggel* . . .”

CHAPTER XIII

FOR the first day at Wenton Philip was almost drunk with the abrupt change from Doomington to the fresh air and the hills. The atmosphere in Wenton House, to be sure, was a little chilly. The relentless cleanliness of each conceivable detail was disturbing. The flaky boiled potatoes served up for midday dinner, Philip's first meal in the House, compared a little disagreeably with the potatoes baked in abundant fat as prepared by Mrs. Massel and only less ably by Dorah. There occurred also a slight contretemps with the implements for pudding. It seemed that most of the boys who sat at Philip's table had paid earlier visits to Wenton House: for Mrs. Kraft, as she stood at the door to receive her junior guests, was able, though the scheduled fortnight was only just beginning, to inquire from one youth, "Well, Abey, and did you get that job in the shipping office?" and from another, "Tell me, Hyman, is the other sister married yet?" and to warn a third, "I hope you will *not* throw stones, Jackie, at the Christian boys in the village! I get blamed for it, and it won't do, it won't do!" To Philip she said, a smile emerging from the grimace of maternal hospitality, "What did you say your name was? Philip Massel? And how old? Oh, of course, Mr. Furness told me, getting on for sixteen! Well, we're glad to see you, Philip! See you have a good time!"

Far chillier than Mrs. Kraft were the boiled potatoes, and chillier the pictures on the walls. Wenton House was not wholly self-supporting; only the charity of several benevolent individuals in Doomington rendered a country fortnight possible to the boys on the easy terms of their acceptance. Hence perhaps the legends below the pictures, "How ready is the arm of Charity!" "Charity, the Handmaiden of God!"

Yet, despite the slight constriction in the atmosphere engendered by these details, the sight of Winckley Pike beyond the wide window of the dining-room, and the quick cry of swallows and the smell of clover atoned for the hygienic potatoes, and made of the pictured legends mere ingenuous statements of fact. The country was not so overwhelming a revolution in the mind of Philip as might have been expected. Poetry had long ago made real enough the unseen hills and the unsmelled blossoms. Bluebell Bank had given concreteness as well as subjective reality to his dreams, and such excursions into the country for a whole day as he had experienced several times, with Dorah once, with Harry and Alec once, and twice with a master at school, had continued the process of revelation. They had once climbed Bracken Hill to see far off the triangular mass of Winckley Pike, and beyond, the more desolate moors and the jagged hills.

It was at tea-time that he first thoroughly became aware of the dark eyes of a lady, a young lady, a lady who was chiefly dark eyes. He had had a dim feeling during dinner that some inexplicable thing was causing a disturbance in his blood. He had given it no name. It may have been nervousness merely due to the new surroundings. But at tea-time he ascertained quite clearly that among the ladies of appallingly mature age seated round the table between his own table and

the windows, a young lady not fearfully much older than himself, was lifting lettuce to her virginal lips. She was sixteen, perhaps seventeen, certainly not eighteen ! They were nice lips for eating lettuce with, but they were nothing to compare with her eyes. Dark eyes, a bit languishing and long, with long lashes. He wondered what she was doing there amid her staid companions. He wondered what the colour of her dark eyes really was. Would you call it brown, or a sort of deep shade of grey ? He became aware of her awareness of him. She was conscious of his scrutiny and the dark eyes stared scorn. A chit of a boy like him ! He realized he had held his cup of tea for long seconds arrested on its journey to his lips. He blushed and drained the chilled cup to its last drop. The lady was chattering vivaciously, her eyes quick and lovely, her lettuce-receiving lips making rich, full curves as she spoke.

“ Make a good tea, you boys ! ” came the vigilant injunction of Mrs. Kraft.

“ Yes, Mrs. Kraft ! ” was the fervent and almost unanimous reply.

“ Yes, Mrs. Kraft ! ” hurried Philip, startled, belated. He observed quite distinctly the lips of the dark-eyed lady shape in mockery “ Yes, Mrs. Kraft ! ” His veins burned resentment against the insolent mystery. The sun shouldered from behind a cloud and thrust his fingers into her thick hair. It sparkled and was alive with lights like a tray of gems in a jeweller’s window. The flash and wealth of the girl’s hair turned him swiftly veering towards Doomington, the thinning hair of his mother.

“ Poor old mother ! ” he mused, deliberately switching his mind away from the lady of long lashes. I wonder if the cough’s eased down a bit ? I wonder

how many days it'll be before she's up and about again. . . . What a funny little nose she's got, a weird little cleft at the tip! What *can* she be doing in that lot? . . . O blow the girl, what's she got to do with it anyhow? Why on earth shouldn't mother get away here, as soon as she's properly all right? Everything's *kosher* and all that sort of thing. He'll *have* to find the money somewhere, that's all! They could sell all those *bechers* and the plush table-cloth. And we never use the samovar nowadays! Oh what a rotten cough it was, like something tearing! Poor old . . ."

"You won't leave that piece of bread and butter on the plate unfinished, Philip Massel, please!" broke in the voice of Mrs. Kraft.

"I'm so sorry!" he said, a quiver in his voice, the cough still jangling and echoing in his brain, "I didn't notice it!"

He again caught the eyes of the dark lady. It seemed that mysteriously she had caught the infection of his sadness. Her eyes were rounder than they had been, though not less dark. Her speech was more subdued.

Or perhaps it was an illusion. Perhaps? Of course it was an illusion! A laughter fell from her throat like a shower of pebbles. Surely she couldn't have meant that almost imperceptible wink for him? An elder person was muttering uncomfortably, "Not so much jam, Mamie!"

Mamie!

An ever so much nicer name, when you came to think of it, than "Edie." "Edie" began with a screech and its one consonant was a miserable dental. Strange how totally Edie and her nymphs had slipped from his thoughts of late months! He remembered the thoroughly nasty row at school after the Walton

Street period had brought him so abysmally low down in form. They had been giddy months. . . . He had learned a lot. . . . Then the Chaucer came, then the school exams. Then she fell ill and got worse as the weeks went on. . . . There had been no room for Edie. She was a sly, deceiving creature, not really to be trusted, though beautiful in a sort of way of course. Now Mamie . . . extraordinary name, Mamie. . . .

The boys had begun to file out of the room, and Philip turned his eyes once more towards Mamie, absurdly daring to hope she was looking in his direction, or, if not actually looking towards him, at least showing the black jewels of her eyes. But her head was turned away; he could make out the leaf of lettuce that was delicately approaching the hidden mouth.

Duly the next day a letter came from Channah. Mother was getting on as well as might be expected, and be sure and get that glass of milk every day, and if ever you walk into streams, go back at once and change into your other boots. Below the girl's writing the wavering Yiddish letters of his mother's signature scrawled sacredly. With a sentimentalism he did not repress, despite a consciousness of Alec's probable attitude towards such behaviour, he placed the letter under his shirt until its successor of next day should displace it. He was walking alone, along a quiet lane behind the ambling shanks of cows. He had made efforts to develop friendly relations with some of the other boys at Wenton House. But most of them seemed to have got acquainted with each other in Doomington or on previous holidays and were already splitting up into exclusive groups of twos and threes. He could not help but feel that they looked upon

him with some distrust. Many of them had already left their schools and were installed in warehouses and factories. Philip was obviously one of those stuck-up people who pronounced their "u's" almost as if they were "a's," which was absurd, and some of them their "a's" as if they were "ar's," which was intolerable. There was something too, he observed, of subtle contempt in their attitude. They had all paid a certain sum of shillings for their respective fortnights, but the rumour had gone abroad that an unknown capitalist was financing Philip's holiday. No, they decided, he was not their class; a little above, a little below, but not of them! So that, not entirely to his displeasure, he was left rather pointedly alone. Upon the second afternoon, then, he was sauntering slowly along at a little distance behind a herd of cows, when he saw far up the lane a female figure clothed in light blue turn round a bend with some speed, advance a little, and then apparently catching sight of the approaching cows, stop suddenly and flatten against a laneside tree. Then pursuing her round the bend lurched a red cow, followed by another and a third. The blue-clad figure sped onward again until the foremost of the advancing cows was not far from her, then she sank once more into the dry ditch. Philip had recognised the black hair. He had almost made out the brightness of the eyes. It was Mamie, the enchantress of the tea-table!

"Frightened of cows!" he thought a little contemptuously. "All right, I'll lend the poor girl a hand!" He came quickly forward and placed himself between the girl and the roadway.

"Excuse me, won't you!" he said, "I personally am not afraid of cows. . . ."

The bent head was lifted with quick anger, the black hair tossing.

"Who said *I* was?" asked the girl.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" said Philip crestfallen. "I didn't understand why——" and he proceeded to move away, a flush of flame lining his ears.

"Don't go away!" the girl shrieked. "I *am* frightened! Horribly!"

He came back. "Right-ho!" he said, and folded his arms. The cows were filing past in the two directions. Mamie looked round from the side of Philip's legs. "They're nearly all gone!" he assured her.

"I hate cows!" she vowed.

He ventured a remark not strictly *à propos*. "And I hate moths! Of course, not to mention beetles!"

"I don't like beetles—*or* moths!" she added speculatively. "But principally mice and cows. But then what would you expect from a sensintive girl like me?"

His mind went floundering after the meaning of "sensintive." Oh, of course, she meant what people usually called "sensitive." What a quaint old-world sort of word it was on Mamie's lips! "Exactly! Exactly!" he agreed politely.

"If I may say so, it isn't exactly *delincate* to know which are bulls and which are cows. Only vulgar girls know *that* sort of thing!" What a fascinating little trick she had of putting "n's" into unexpected places. *Delincate*! It gave the very word a delicacy of its own.

"Oh, yes!" he said with conviction.

"I'd best be getting up!" she remarked after a slight silence. "It was very *sweet* of you to give me your protection. Thank you!" her lips shaped lusciously. "Thank you! So sweet of you! Quite chiválrous!" she completed, with a delightfully displaced accent.

"Not at all, not at all!" murmured Philip. Really girls *did* make an awful fool of him! It was about

time he said something a little more elaborate than "Exactly!" or "Not at all!" He had said more before a crowd of working men in ten seconds than he seemed capable of in ten hours in the presence of this quite extraordinary young lady.

"You might," came her voice, a little waspishly, "help a lady to her feet when she gives you an invitation! That you might!" She was rising from the ditch. He bent over towards her, stung and foolish, and lifted her to her feet. The pout left her lips at once. "Oh, thank you so much!" she trilled. "Quite grown-up you are, somehow! How long are you staying in this *dirty* hole!"

"As long as you are!" he said recklessly, in a spurt of shy gallantry.

"Go *hon*, now!" she mocked, and flicked the tip of his nose with outstretched fingers. "That you aren't! I'll have to run away from you if you talk like that!" She broke into song—"Saucy and so young!" she quavered. Her voice sent little waves of pleasure coursing up and down his spine. "I'm older than you are, I'll bet!" he ventured maturely.

"How old, Percival?" she asked, signifying her pleasure with a smile of arch gratitude.

"About seventeen!" he lied.

"Well, I'm only just a bit older, nearly eighteen!" she said glibly. Her hand patted and smoothed her hair. "Nearly eighteen!" she repeated, as if the sound of the words gave her real pleasure.

"So we're sort of practically the same age!" suggested Philip.

"Are we now? Well, you *are* taller than me and only a month or so younger, so we'll call it *quits*, as we say on the stage!"

"On the *stage*?" Philip asked breathlessly.

"On the concert-platform, I *do* mean! Not low-down music-halls and musical comedies! I'm a singer!"

"By Jove!" Philip whispered, "I didn't know you were one of those!"

"One of those what?" she asked sharply.

"Singers!" he replied innocently. "Why, what?"

"Oh, it's all right, what's-your-name!" she said.

"Oh, by the way, what *is* your name?"

"Philip, my name is! Philip Massel!"

"*Quite* nice!" she approved. "Mine's Ursula!"

"But I heard a lady say 'Mamie!'"

She frowned. "Oh, that's only my Jewish name—Mamie Jacobovitch. Of course you'll have heard my professional name, 'Ursula Daventry.' But I don't mind being called Mamie on holidays! But how long," she asked, changing the subject, "did you say you were staying? A fortnight, I suppose? I'm staying three weeks!"

"I thought girls weren't supposed to stay at Mrs. Kraft's, are they?"

"Oh, it's my precious mother's doing! She's gone off to Chester to help Auntie Bessie have a baby, although what good *she'll* do . . . but I oughtn't to talk to you like this, you're only a kid after all!"

"You just said, you know, we're really the same age to all intents and purposes, didn't you?"

"Of course I did! Of course we are! Where was I! Oh, yes! Well, and mother's a cousin of Mrs. Hannetstein and Mrs. Hannetstein's a big friend of Mrs. Kraft and there you are. *I'm* just shunted out of the way! Not wanted in Chester! Not trusted on my own in Doomington! It's filthy! And to be locked up with a lot of old women!"

"I hope it won't be so rotten for you after all! If the weather keeps fine——"

"Don't be so *hinty*, Philip! But all right, in any case there isn't any real reason why we shouldn't go out together sometimes, is there?—so long as we keep it dark. I suppose Mrs. Kraft would pack me off straight away, the *woman*, if she sniffed that I was carrying on!"

"But talking isn't carrying on?"

"You have no idea what filthy minds they've got, all of them! But look here, Mr. Philip, we're out on the main road now and those are the back windows of Wenton House. They might be spying out even now, some of them! You can't tell with these females! I'll tell you what, just slip back into the lane and follow on in five minutes, don't you think? Good-bye, Percival, see you to-morrow? *Such* thanks for rescuing me from the bulls! Good-bye!"

Philip slipped back into the lane, his head whirling. Bewildering, audacious, inexplicable girl! So beautifully friendly and candid, and so intelligent, and so much a woman of the world—a concert-singer! And she took one as one's equal, not as a nice school-boy who was only just putting his nose into the world. Philip was flattered and excited. He sat down against the hedge, and his hand wandered for his handkerchief towards the pocket sewn on his shirt. As he extracted the handkerchief, something crackled. The letter, Channah's letter, with his mother's signature! He had forgotten all about her! Oh, what a hog he was! Probably coughing her chest out on the sofa that very moment! A tiny feeling of revolt against the compelling Mamie entered his heart. Almost forgotten his mother! That would never do! But what eyes she had, smiling and dark and secret, even if she *was* so

charmingly frank on the outside ! There was tragedy in those eyes ! Yes, he was sure there must be tragedy in her life somewhere. Poor girl ! he murmured protectively. By the time he reached Wenton House he had constructed for her a sombre Greek background against which her proud bright spirit shone unyielding. Poor girl ! he repeated. But what eyes ! he mused finally, what eyes !

Next morning no letter arrived. He was furious, chiefly with Channah. "What does she mean by promising me and then letting me down like this ! Another of her rotten old actor-heroes ; absolutely sloppy about them, she is ! I wonder how mother can be ! They ought to know how anxious they'd make me not writing after they'd promised ! Absolutely filthy, taking the bloom off a chap's holiday, the only holiday I've ever had !" He spilt his coffee with bad temper. Mrs. Kraft stared sourly from her post at the "ladies'" table. Philip rushed out after breakfast to compose a letter of fierce invective. It then occurred to him that if his mother was worse, his letter wouldn't help. He tried to convince himself that she was better and that Channah had therefore not thought the letter worth bothering about. He tore up the letter, but his bad temper increased. The morning passed very dully and he was too sullen to be interested in the munificent substitution of fried for boiled potatoes at dinner. But as the afternoon shadows deepened, his feet took him disconsolately towards the lane where the cow-and-Mamie episode had taken place. In that direction lay, he felt, the only oasis in the ennui of Wenton. An absurdity suddenly struck him. Here was the romantic, the poet, who had once rhapsodized over a blade of grass and shouted for glory at a bird's song, here was he, with strange sweet singers on every

branch of unnamed trees, with wild flowers dappling the meadows, scented weeds filling the streamside air, here was he dull and sulky and stupid! What was coming over him? Had the year ended in too feverish a bout of work? But of course it was Channah and that letter! Hang the girl, why hadn't she written? Yet that wasn't all, there was something else making him unquiet, setting up cross currents in these free Wenton days which until recently had seemed a dream not for a dreary time capable of realization. What else beside Channah? Oh, yes, here was the lane where he had seen the huddling mass of blue. Mamie! Undoubtedly, it was that weird girl with the dark eyes putting things out of tune! He didn't like her! There was too much assurance about her. . . . By Heaven, here she was, sitting demure and watchful on the further side of a sycamore!

"Good afternoon, Philip!"

"Good afternoon, Miss—er, Miss Daventry!"

"Well, if you won't call me Mamie, I can't say I really mind, you know! But I don't think it's at all friendly of you! That I don't! Particularly after——"

"I'm fearfully sorry, Mamie! I didn't think you'd really like to, after only meeting yesterday!"

"After all, what does that matter with girls and boys like me and you! Won't you just sit down here, or are you going on . . .?"

"Oh, if you'll let me——"

"Yes, do! Now what is it is bringing that nasty frown on Philip's forehead! Out with it, he mustn't look so worried or Mamie will think all sorts of things!"

"It's about, well, it's about a letter!"

"Oh, oh!" said the girl teasingly. "Oh, oh! Tell us all about her! And you do look so young to be carrying on! I said to myself when I first saw you,

I said, 'Now there's a young man an innocent girl like me's got to be careful of! I can see it in his eyes, I can!'" She hummed the words of a song. She momentarily forgot her friend as she pursued a phrase along a trilling tremolo. And then, "Oh, yes, where are we! A letter from his little sweetheart! Oh, *oh*, Philip!"

"It isn't!" Philip declared. He explained haltingly the nature of the letter.

"Oh, don't worry about that sort of thing on holiday!" enjoined Mamie airily. "*I* never would, not if my mother were dying of the croup! And if your sister doesn't keep her promises, she's a cat and it's her own look-out! Oh no, no, no, don't let a little thing like *that* worry you!"

"Really, don't talk of her like that! She's a sport! She's not a cat!"

"Did I say your sister was a cat? Oh, I didn't mean *that*, you didn't get me proper. You see it's like this. . . . Oh, hell! It's not worth bothering about! What was I going to say? Let me see—yes! Don't be afraid of me, Philip, why don't you move up a bit, there's room enough? That's right! Now let's talk about something interesting, not letters and stuff!"

A flame of resentment was smouldering in Philip. He was searching round for something to say which would re-establish his self-respect. Peculiar girl! There was no making her out! What was she doing? She was holding his hand! What soft fingers she had! She stroked his wrist, then his forearm. Quaint waves of pleasure went tingling along his backbone. She was leaning her head on his shoulder. Her lovely hair was blowing against his cheek, her bosom was pressing warmly against him.

"Philip!" she said. He made no reply. "Philip!" she repeated. What was there to say? He liked the feel of her against him, he liked the eyelashes curling from her eyes. "Say something, Philip!"

"Mamie," he said lamely, "it's awfully nice of you to be so—to be——"

"Hush, Philip, do be quiet!"

They sat thus for some time, Philip's mind drowsing in an unfamiliar content. They rose at last and separated at the corner of the lane. When he thought, half an hour later, of the letter which had not been sent, he murmured, "Oh, it's all right, I'll hear to-morrow! Nothing's the matter, nothing!" He could feel still the softness of her hair on his cheek.

Channah's note next day was shorter than the last. She did not mention her oversight of the previous day. Once more the signature of his mother lay crooked and inexpressibly precious at the foot of the page.

"I told you so!" said Mamie triumphantly that evening. *Absolutely* no need to worry! Hold my arm a wee bit tighter!"

When no letter arrived the following day, it required no great effort to allay the pangs of unease. "To-morrow!" he said. "It'll be all right to-morrow! I *wish* Channah weren't so lazy. Now mother's getting better there really isn't any excuse. . . ."

Channah's note of the next day was almost curt. "Mother getting on just the same. Looking forward to your coming back."

But surely there was a change in mother's signature! Oh, surely! He took his wallet from his pocket and removed the two letters he had already received. A numbing anxiety gripped him. It was quite impossible to doubt that the Yiddish letters of the latest signature were sprawling about weakly, the vertical strokes ending

in impotent scratches. "God!" he exclaimed in sudden fright. "Nothing can be wrong!" He tried to reassure himself. "She was very tired, that's what it is! Oh, *she's* all right! But what if anything were to happen to her while I'm away! That's absurd! Can't a person make a few scratches in signing a letter without giving rise to silly nightmare ideas? I don't know what on earth's wrong with me these last few days! I wish I hadn't met Mamie! She always seems to be quarrelling with mother inside me! What on earth *is* wrong with me! What have I got to drag Mamie in for! Quarrelling with mother! Isn't that a stupid thing to say about the poor girl! Poor Mamie! Oh, damn Mamie!"

They had made an appointment for that evening in a quiet angle between a barn and a hayrick. "I'll be damned if I'll go and see her!" But at tea that day she looked towards him with such careful languor and winked her large fine eye so solemnly that his resolve weakened. "After all *she's* done nothing! I wish I weren't so anxious about mother, things would be so splendid . . . Would you pass the bread and butter, please! Thank you!"

She kept him waiting for twenty minutes. He fumed, his temper was thoroughly chafed. "Curse it! I'll go back home to-morrow, I can't bear this filthy suspense! What does she mean by keeping me hanging about like this!" A corncrake creaked from an adjacent field. "Oh, the idiot!" he swore. "I'll wring its dirty neck! I'll go away if she doesn't turn up in three minutes! Can anything really be wrong at home! After all, the doctor said she was coming round—oh, blast that bird!" His foot knocked angrily. "Hello!" he whistled. "What's that?" From quite close at hand a low singing travelled towards him.

It was a cold voice, but peculiarly sweet. It was a mere tune, without meaning or words, but it soothed him like a cool hand on the forehead. Its pitch was low, like a tiny bird's. Probably the voice could not be heard at all a few yards away. The singing was for himself, a message! Then he saw a slight foot and a blue skirt emerge beyond the corner of the hayrick and black hair floated into view. The warbling became clearer, though not less soft, the dark eyes of Mamie were beaming upon him and her rich red lips were ravishing their music upon the little space between the barn and the hayrick. Philip lay back, soothed and drowsed, the melody played about him like a fountain.

She was by his side, having said not a word; her singing was reduced to the very verge of sound. Then she was silent, her two arms round Philip's waist. The corncrake croaked unheard. He put his two hands on her cheeks and looked into her eyes. There was a glint of mockery lurking among their shadows.

"Can I——?" he asked whispering, yearning, afraid.

"You little fool!" she said. And saying this, she seemed old as the line of high hills which swung against the southward horizon. From a gloom of generations she spoke, a desiring animal voice sounding from a depth of many histories.

"You little fool! Haven't I been waiting for it! Oh, you slowcoach!"

His lips darted hungrily to hers. His body was aflame. He pressed her hard against his breast. His lips relaxed, but hers were still passionate, remorseless, unslacking. Then at last their lips fell apart.

"Oh!" she said, and there was a hint of a squeak in her voice. "Oh, now wasn't that really nice!"

Even now he had room to be shocked at her unfor-

fortunate choice of an adjective. "Sweetheart!" he said, "It was more! It was full and golden like the harvest moon! It was like a flooded river, foaming gold in the sunset! It was, it was—Oh, for God's sake don't let me make a speech! Kiss me!"

"Oh, but I like you to! Say it again, Philip! Take one hand away, put it on your heart, like so! Now fire away!"

"Mamie, how can you tease a chap, now—*now*! At a time when——"

"Now you're going to be sloppy! I can beat you at that game! Bend closer!" she enjoined, playing her fingers about in his hair. "How do you like this one?"

The lines of her bosom were soft and only half-secret as he held her, looking dazedly into her eyes. He was kissing her eyelids and the hollows under the eyes. "Philip!" she murmured, "How delicate of you!"

The word impinged, now as he kissed the slender fringe of those dark eyes, unpleasantly against his skin. But she lifted her eyelids once more and once more he was drowning in sensuous waters, flickering weakly down dim lights and warm opaque shadows.

They said little. It was all a playing with their faces and hands and lips. He seemed to be growing deeper and deeper into her. She was leaning against him, pale, a little tired, it seemed. Once more his head was stooping to her lips. Without warning, he found her rising to her feet and standing over him.

"Mamie!"

"We'd best stop! That'll do, Philip Massel! Leave some till next time. . . ."

"Mamie, but what . . ."

"Good-night!"

He saw her pass swiftly from view as she flickered round the angle of the barn.

"Mamie!" he shouted. "What's the matter? What on earth have I done?"

No reply came back to him. He rose a little dizzily and came out into the evening. He saw the trees kissing each other in a little wind. The strange sweet smell of her kisses was on his lips. He saw two horses in a field rubbing their heads together. Clouds overhead kissed and mingled. Leaves fluttering kissed each other and darted aloof, only once more to bring their lips together. He heard a stream along the field where he was standing so crazed and tired, lipping and kissing the pebbles.

"Mamie!" he whispered. "She loves me!" Overhead the cry of rooks came, raucously, ironically. "Don't believe it! Don't believe it! Don't-you-believe it!" Who was being ironical? Was it he, was it the rooks? "Don't believe it!" they cawed. "To hell with you all!" he shouted into the black vortex. He lifted his hand to his mouth as if to retain there the impress of her lips.

"I needn't be a fool about it!" he muttered through his teeth.

He fell asleep that night with a sense of the closeness of her face. Dimly and dazed he remembered that her lips had seemed to drink him up. Engulfed in her, he lay sleeping at length. And yet was he truly asleep? From what world came this enamel can with the rusted edges, from the real world, from the world of unintelligible dreams? Oh, yes, of course; he recognized it! It was the can that hung on a nail over the scullery sink. They were filling the can with water, unseen and pale hands holding it to the guttering tap. "Don't think of them!" the girl said, "think of my lips!

Aren't they juicy, aren't they sweet?" But processionally, as though that cheap can were a flagon of holy wines, they were bearing it away, along the lobby, and towards the front door. The cat was crying eerily from a shut room. Tick—tick—tick! moaned the clock Candles fluttering! . . . Good girl, Mamie! Here she was, with flushed cheeks and tossing hair! Wouldn't let them have it all their own way, she wouldn't! The can of water stood—why, why? stood at the pavement's edge. She lifted the can and threw the water away, but the can dropped from her fingers, and here once more was the can at the pavement's edge, full once more with dark, mournful waters. "Never mind them!" she whispered. She bent towards him, her eyes desirous. Yet ever quenchless, like a vase of tears, the can stood at the pavement's edge. And here was Mrs. Levine, sodden flour on her apron, and long, torn wools fluttering from her shawl. She was wringing her hands. She bent towards the can of water. "Look away!" said the girl fiercely. A rumbling of wheels. . .

A cock was crowing. The leaves of a full tree were swishing against the window. Philip opened to the dawn red and apprehensive eyes.

But his first remembrance as he stared towards the oblong of eight lights was not the girl, not all the grape-dark kissing; it was a sudden stab of contrition—"The letter! My mother's signature! By God, what a swine I was! I forgot!"

Mrs. Kraft read the names of the recipients of letters during breakfast. Nothing? Nothing for Philip Massel! He stared savagely towards Mrs. Kraft. She might have read out his name alongside of the fools she had mentioned; he needed his letter a thousand times more than they! He turned resentful eyes towards

Mamie. Mamie was chattering sweetly with Mrs. Hannetstein. He stumbled into the garden and sat disconsolately against a trunk. The self-satisfied buzzing of a bee over its tremendously exaggerated labours annoyed him acutely. Minutes passed. His despondency and irritation became more and more unbearably stupid. He had allowed himself to forget her, he had allowed those hungry quiet eyes to slip from his heaven, he had allowed—oh, what a maddeningly fierce scarlet was the geranium in those precise window-boxes! What an insane monotony of triplicate phrases that shallow fat bird sang yonder, the bird with the mottled breast! What a gawky youth was this passing through the front gate with a bumpkin leer and corkscrew feet, a foolish little ochre envelope held stiffly before him! He leaned back against the tree and closed his eyes tiredly. How long would it take before she would really be about? Of course it had been a boast, a joke, that she'd have a monstrous *kuggel* to greet his return! His head was buzzing foolishly.

"Philip Massel! A telegram for you!" Of course that had nothing to do with him! Who the hell was Philip Massel, anyhow? He heard the metallic tinkling of a grasshopper, and saw against his shut eyelids huge yellow spheres like brandy-balls and blue rings and spectral vapours.

"Philip Massel! Didn't you hear? A telegram, I said!"

The bumpkin was grinning towards him. At the front door Mrs. Kraft stood, arm outstretched. Philip turned a frightened face from youth to woman, from woman to youth. He came forward and opened the envelope.

"Mother dangerous return immediately.

CHANNAH,"

he read.

A blare of terror sounded in his brain like trumpets.

"Mrs. Kraft!" he choked. "My mother's dying! Oh, quick, I've got to go home!"

From very far away her voice came. "You must have some hot coffee before you go! The next train's the eleven-twenty!"

"You don't know what she's like!" said Philip, burning with a sudden tremendous desire to make this woman understand over whose beloved, intolerably beloved head, lay hideous shadow.

"I know!" the woman was saying. "I've been through it all!" She had taken Philip's arm. "Come in now, you can't go off at once! Poor lad, I'm sorry! But then, perhaps, all will turn out well. Jane!" she shouted, "bring some strong coffee in at once!"

"I don't want anything!" he said. But he found the coffee scorching his palate and coursing hotly down his throat. He found Mrs. Kraft by his side, as he started to fold things into his bag with hands which, uselessly suspended at the wrists, seemed to be lumps of lead. A shirt fell from his fingers to the floor as though it were woven of metal threads. Mrs. Kraft bent quietly to the shirt, folded it and tucked it away; the boy for one moment swung round to look at her, through a gap in the clouds which had gathered about his head. "What's been wrong with me all this time?" he speculated. "I've never seen this woman before, I've never been in the same room!" She had passed repeatedly from his vision like a cart going by on a crowded road—bearing no lineaments of her own, being merely a thing of which his senses had been half-conscious. Was she stern, forbidding? He did not know. Was she, as she seemed now, a grave-eyed woman, quiet, full of pity? How could he argue it

out now, while the straps were fumbling from his ineffectual fingers, and like a vigilant automaton, her hands had usurped his own ?

"Harry Levi !" he heard her shout into the garden. "Go with Philip Massel to the station and carry his bag for him !"

She mumbled a difficult word of sympathy and the blank door lay between him and Mrs. Kraft. Three and four and five times Harry Levi asked, "Is she chucking you out, Massel, or wot is it, eh ?" He had no quarrel with Harry Levi. There was no reason why he should not be civil to Harry Levi ; but his lips would not move, and the roof of his mouth was like burnt crust. Harry Levi relapsed into an injured and simmering silence.

There were minutes of waiting at the station, minutes blank and ugly and high like the wall of a factory. The train came hurtling in from among the hills, uttering as it approached the station a lugubrious and prolonged howl. The howl reverberated through all the corners of Philip's heart, rocking, shuddering, dismally dying away.

He was in the train at last. "I must face the fact, I must face the fact !" Chu—chu—chu ! the train went, chu—chu—chu ! "Face the fact ! Face the fact !" As he lay in the corner of the carriage, huddled like a discarded coat, he realized that the fool's paradise in which he had lived lay about him futile and desolate. A puff of wind and the walls had tottered, there was a groaning of uprooted beams, a smell of hot dust, overhead the intolerable eye of the sun looking sourly down ! Fool he had been ! Had he not seen her dying before his eyes, year by year, day by day !

A little specious voice whispered, "But Channah says she's only ill. She doesn't say—not *that* ! Per-

haps it won't . . . really, Philip, you can't tell . . . perhaps . . . !”

“Dangerously ill !” Philip countered, “Dangerously ill !”

“Quite, I see ! But not—not the other thing. . . . Other people have been dangerously ill and yet, you know. . . .”

It was only the somnolent fat man opposite to him, whose belly curved below a heavy gilt chain and whose huge red cheeks cushioned curved long eyelashes, who prevented Philip from leaping to his feet and shrieking wildly. “Enough of your lies ! I’ve allowed myself to be taken in long enough ! Oh, for God’s sake be quiet now, be quiet, or I’ll go mad !”

The puerility, the futility of it all ! And had he assured himself that though all other women soever in the tremendous history of the world had died, she alone would be exonerate, for his sake, forsooth—she who now perhaps was lying dead. . . ? No, that at least could not be ! She would wait for him. By God, God would pay for it if she was not allowed to wait for him !

Oh, speed on, speed on, reluctant and sombre train ! Devour the separating miles, throw the hills behind you, plunge forward to the cities, speed on or she shall be dead ! Oh, carry me swiftly to her waiting eyes ! Her eyelids are heavy ! Keep them not waiting so long that they shall droop, droop ! Oh, swifter, swifter !

What mercy could he expect from the train ? Had he not known all along and kept the knowledge safely hidden in his furthest recesses ? Of course she had insisted on his going away from her ! She had known that this was coming ! She had determined to keep him immune from the shadow whose fringes she knew to be even then hanging over the house in Angel Street !

But it had been for him to stand fast, to say—"No mother, I'm not going! Whatever you say, I must, I will be with you!" She would have understood with that wisdom of hers which lay far from her mere lips, was glimpsed but fitfully in the cloudy hollows of her eyes.

Of course he had known! What else had he meant by that insistence on her signature! It must have been patent to them all how he had dared to go in the teeth of so imperious a premonition that he demanded her handwriting from day to day. That girl. . . .! The memory of her pecked at the flesh between his ribs like some insatiable bird! Kissing, fooling round with her hair, her lips, while *she* lay weakening, dying. A sound crawled through his teeth. In his own ears it was cavernous, heavy, loud. Suddenly self-conscious, he looked nervously up to the fat man, but the heavy chin still hung placidly relaxed and the shoulders were lifting a little to the incipient snores.

The window beside him was shut. His shirt and collar seemed to have fastened tight round his throat, choking him. He dropped the window with a crash and the cool air came surging in. It was not enough, and he set his face out against the jaws of the wind and felt its chilly comfort washing the roots of his hair.

Swifter, swifter, train, absorb the miles! That white house below the chimney stack on the horizon there, shall we never outstrip it? Grinning there in its unapproachable immobility! Ah, now, the horizon swivels round on a pivot, and swift for your callous face, oh, white, grinning house! Wind, wind, what message do you bring from her? Is she waiting? No, no, I shall not come too late!

Who's speaking? "That'll do, young feller-melad!" The draught has awakened the dozing fat man.

His lips vibrate with growing indignation. "Shoot that winder oop and sit tha down! Awake sin' fower o'th'clock and tha wilt go playin' tricks with winders, wilt'a. . . ?"

The window is replaced along the full length of its groove, and with a rumbling from the gills, a slight outraged crest-heavy swinging, the fat man once more slides away into somnolence.

What shall he do as the slow miles dawdle by? Poetry! How long he has deserted poetry! What strange affinity had there been between poetry and beetles! Rarely, rarely since those old days of crackling wall-paper and whisperful spent cinders where the beetles crawled, had a pencil, busy a moment ago on the annotation of vacuous texts, found itself scrawling rhymes and dreams. He had felt that poetry would not come his way again, but now . . . as the train beat like a living pulse, now that his own heart seemed to be moving forward and backward again, a great shining piston . . . He hunted in his pockets for a pencil, took out a blunt stump, and lifted an envelope from the same pocket. With a quick dart of anguish he realized it was the last letter he had received from Channah, where already the signature of his mother sprawled with the impotence of death. He flung the pencil away as if the impulse which had produced it from his pocket had been treason. He remembered with bitter mirth an anticipatory consolation he had once frequently imbibed. At the same time as he had persistently assured himself of his mother's immortality, he had whispered, smirking, "Yes, but when she does die, won't I start writing wonderful poetry! Marvellous elegies that'll make Gray sound like a threepenny kettledrum! I'll make 'em sit up! And I'll have a little book bound in soft red leather. . . ." The tortured lad winced as

he brought to mind the old fatuity. He would make capital out of her death, would he, little books bound in soft red leather ! How well he knew now he would be like a fallen leaf on a road trodden by a thousand feet !

Oh, swifter, train ! Never train moved so slowly ! He moved from against the fat man and pushed the opposite seat ludicrously with his feet to bring the train sooner to Doomington.

He was holding the envelope in his hand. And he had allowed the girl called Mamie to persuade him to take no alarm in the weakening of the signature. He had suppressed the instinct from swimming into clear consciousness, the instinct to return at once before the hand weakened into the last torpor. Now at length the contest and the protagonists of which his mind had been the arena stood starkly before him, and he knew, with what shame, what despair, who had prevailed. Mamie and a tickling of the lips, shafts of shy pleasure about the loins—and his mother, waiting. With abrupt clarity, the enamelled can which last night had prevailed over the disorder of his dreams, returned. Now clearly he realized the heart-breaking symbolism of the enamel can ; not merely symbolism ! Soon the can should be not merely a symbol, but a fact ; soon, perhaps now !

In all his forethought of death, not in especial relation with his mother, but with anybody he loved or knew, one element in the Jewish custom had brought him most distress. Frequent observation had instructed him that when a dead body lay beyond the doors of a Jewish house, a vessel of water and a bucket to replenish it were placed at the edge of the pavement. As the living passed by the place of death, the vessel was lifted to sluice from each hand alternately of the passer-by the contamination issuing from the melan-

choly doors. It was a sign of death which had sometimes come upon him so suddenly but with such incontrovertible assertion that it had long filled the crevices of his mind with horror.

The actual enamel tin of his dreams he also recognized. It had been condemned a long time ago to the scullery at Angel Street, because the enamel had been chipped by old service from its edges, and it now hung, he well remembered, on a rusted nail by the sink. It had been used by his father and himself for the hand-washing which preceded every meal. There could be no vestige of doubt that when the time came for this desperate and bitter use, the enamel can would be lifted from the nail and would contain cold water for cleansing at the pavement's edge.

Ah, how he realized now what Mamie was endeavouring to do when she had lifted the enamel can in his dreams and thrown away the water, and the can had fallen from her fingers. Once more she sought to delude him into believing that all was well, that the deadly need did not exist for the cleansing of hands at the enamel can. Even as she had sought to assure him that all was well with the writing in Channah's letter! Too late! There at the pavement's edge, despite her duplicity, the enamel can lay once more, its little lake of grey water reflecting the grey sky. Here came a woman, swaying in her sorrow, her shawl slipping from her head! She stooped. Over the knuckles of the left hand washed the water, over the knuckles of the right.

Philip shivered suddenly. What if he actually found the enamel can outside the doorsteps? Could he bear to go into the house? No, that at least he had not deserved! Not that! She would wait, he knew she would wait.

But see! the streets were now set thick along the

path of the railway, dingy parallels, skulking streets at right angles. The fields had long been engulfed in red brick, grey brick. The town once more was gathering about his lungs. And there, pretentious, ugly, forbidding, like the policemen for whom it was their focal centre, reared the chimney of the prison on Doomington Road. The fat man blinked with alarm as the train jarred and jolted into the station.

"Doomington!" Philip murmured, "Be kind, God!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE tramcar stopped at a corner nearer the station by one block of buildings than Angel Street. Rayman, the butcher, was hacking away with indecent enthusiasm at a hulk of ribs. At Lansky, the draper's, unconcerned girl assistants were measuring lengths of cloth by outstretching one corner and lifting the other to the teeth. Philip noticed with an acute realization of detail the stupid cat with a closed eye and a foolish blue ribbon round its neck which was arching its back lasciviously against a woman's leg. The distance he had walked could scarcely have been more than fifty yards, yet when he came to Moishele's shop at the corner it seemed to him for one moment that he had been walking and walking since dawn broke. Above him and across the intervening gap of the street, on the side wall of the "Crown Inn," and over the advertisement for Groves and Whitnall's Ale, he read on an oblong plaque, "Angel Street."

Angel Street! He dared not put into words what he feared. Must he turn into the street? Oh, turn swiftly, swiftly, never a moment to lose! A small clump of figures down the street brought momentary terror over his blurred eyes, until he made out the wheels and the containing boards of a fruit-handcart.

Thank God, nothing! Nothing at the pavement's edge outside the steps of his father's house! Quietly he knocked. He could hear his heart knocking loudly

as the hand knocked. Channah came to the door; pale she was, with wide, dark eyes. A spurt of light came into her eyes when she saw Philip standing there, then the light flickered away.

"How is she?"

"Bad! Go in and see!"

"Just take my bag away. Oh, Channah, I thought I'd never get here!"

"Give it me and go in! She's been asking for you!"

"But why didn't you send for me before? Why did you let me stay away so long? How could you do it? If I hadn't come home in time, Channah, oh, think. . ."

"But it's all been so sudden, so sudden! Only two or three days ago she broke down suddenly. She just crumpled up. You never saw such a difference in a day or two! Oh, it's been terrible! Let's come away, we mustn't keep the door open! Why are you standing there like that, Philip! Shake yourself, be sensible!"

"Nothing, Channah, nothing! Oh, tell me, why did you persuade me to go away, both of you? If I ever forgive you, can I forgive myself?"

"Philip, let me close the front door! Come in, don't stand like a stone! I can't understand you; why don't you go in at once, she's been asking for you, I tell you!"

"Don't you see how I'm afraid? It's on my mind—what I just said! Why did you let me go?"

"We hadn't the least idea of anything. You'd have upset her if you'd missed the chance. You'd have brought it about sooner!"

"Do you think she really meant it—about the *kuggel*? Wasn't she just joking?"

"No. She wanted to get up to make you some and send it to you! *Emmes*, Philip, if it isn't true!"

He had been standing stiff in each joint, touched as with frost. Suddenly all his body drooped. His voice fell to an almost unintelligible whisper. "Let me go in to her. . . . !"

He moved the few steps to the parlour door and turned the handle. He was at her bedside. Only her eyes he first saw. They were larger, warmer, deeper than they had been at any time before. Because of the eyes, he was not immediately conscious with the whole of his mind of the pallor in which they were set : not merely pallor, a bloodless yellow.

But the consciousness of this pallor was soaking through each pore of his body and mind, even as he bent to kiss her powerless lips ; even as he rose and was saying, "Look, mother, mother ! I'm back from Wenton !" The consciousness of her pallor so steeped each atom, each corpuscle in him that he became yellow as she. Still, for her sake, he held his lips firm against his teeth, subdued the impulse in his four limbs to fling themselves wildly, wildly, upon the floor. She was too weak to answer. He saw her mouth endeavour to frame words and abandon the attempt. Only by a lifting of the eyelids she showed the joy at the centre of that waning heart, and by the dim flush of colour which spread across her cheeks.

He knew not for what length of time he stood motionless over a body so thin it hardly seemed to break the line of the counterpane. At last he became aware that the door had opened and Channah had come through.

"Let me just come near her, Philip, I'll see if she can take a drop of milk ! Dorah's in the kitchen ! She wants you to go in and have some food !"

"Not now !" he whispered.

There was a shuffling with utensils on the bedside table. The sound seemed to relax a chain which had

held the boy taut. He staggered a few steps and, perceiving the moth-eaten yellow plush arm-chair near him, he sank into it with convulsive abandonment. Now he became consciously and fully aware of the shock he had endured. Sometimes in his dreams he had seen her dead. One dream of them all had lifted his eyelids at midnight from eyes glassy with horror. Now as it came back to him, he winced and writhed. He had seen her head lying on that copper tray where each Sabbath eve she had placed the uncut bread before her husband. Beside her head lay a squat beaker of wine, the beaker over which, before the meal began, Reb Monash incanted the *kiddush* with shut eyes. In a groping, childish way he had endeavoured to exorcise the terror of this dream by rationalizing it, by relating the hideous phantasm to the fabric of reality. He knew that the copper tray gleaming always like smooth dark mahogany might stand as symbol of the heavy labours which year by year reduced her to a ghost. She had the Jewish housewife's intense pride in the cleanliness and beauty of her home. Each Thursday evening the kitchen table was littered with trays, brass candlesticks, beakers, tins of polish, dusters. Though the reek of the polish was offensive to her lungs and sent her into fits of coughing, no Thursday evening saw the arduous ritual abated by one iota. But Philip knew that the significance of the dream lay deeper than this. Obscurely he realized that the beaker of wine represented all the sacerdotalism of his race; in some way far too profound for his guessing the vision of the severed head was complicated with that antique ritual, so magnificently alive and yet so ineffably dead. The head was lying on that tray of her own devoted polishing throughout the doomed years, lying as an offering to the impendent bearded God of his race. The cavernous lips opened as

the beaker rose to their glooms. "I am that I am!" a voice moaned among endless colonnades of hills toppling towards the verges of space. How came it that the eyes of Jehovah aloof among the chasmed clouds were the eyes of Reb Monash, sitting upon his peculiar and inalienable chair in the corner of the kitchen? And the copper tray was a lake profound with many distances and many generations where dim ancestral shapes flickered from deep to deep. Twofold tyrannies along the deliberate reaches of the Nile, wildernesses and weak lads straggling and dying in the wake of the wanderers, smitten lands of exile, *Kossacken* galloping in with sabres and flung beards, a slight lad crumpled in a moth-eaten yellow plush arm-chair, crumpled, broken, too mournful for any tears.

He had seen her dead in dreams, but never so pale, so shrunken as now, her mouth retaining little if any at all of the weak, warm milk Channah was lifting on a spoon. An ague shivering visited his whole body. Clearly he brought her to mind as she hovered round him with cherries and tea on those immortal afternoons; he saw her struggling with the Acroceraunian mountains, her lips humorously twisting to shape the alien syllables. He remembered the quiet pride with which, long ago, she had regarded Reb Monash as he sat oracular in his chair, his admirers drinking with reverent avidity the wine of wisdom flowing from his lips. The boy's throat shook with harsh, suppressed sobs.

Channah spoke. "Philip, she's calling to you!"

Not a tear had risen to his eyes. He bent over his mother with a wan smile. Weakly, slowly, she spoke. He knew that she had been lying there, waiting to summon up the strength with which to frame a few words.

"Nu, Feivele, my own one. Art thou feeling stronger for being away?"

"Mother, loved one," he replied in her own Yiddish. "Yes, stronger. But I had rather I had been with thee!"

"Speak not thus! I was happy to think of thee among the fields. Didst thou have a special egg a day and milk?"

"I did! But no, mother, thou must not talk more! Thou art not strong now, but wait, wait . . . when thou art better. . . ."

"Be thou not a child! Feivele, I am going . . . going. . . ."

The words were smothered in a tiny dry coughing. Channah came forward to help her. He turned his head away from the forlorn struggle.

Reb Monash had been to the *Polisher Shool* for *minchah*. He returned, and stood at the door, large-eyed, haunted.

"Thou art back, Feivele?" he said. He seemed to be searching for further words, but nothing came. The voice seemed to Philip to strike against his skin, then to fall away dully to the floor.

"Yes, *tatte*, yes," he said mechanically, and the abstract sphere in which his mother dying and his grief and himself seemed to be encrystalled, closed round him again in separating completeness.

All day greedily he remained with her, knowing with a mournful exultance that when she gathered strength she would say a few words to him; yet when these moments came, saying "Hush, mamma, not now! Sweetest, hush!" bending over her, faintly touching her forehead.

A long time had passed, and he was conscious not merely of hunger, but of a concrete clawed weakness tearing at the pit of his stomach, before he allowed Channah to take him into the kitchen and cut some slices of bread and butter for him and fill a pint mug

with tea. Dorah was there putting washed plates on the shelves, and as Channah sat down at the table, she moved away to the parlour to take her place. Channah was sitting opposite to him, herself sipping tea, not with any interest, but because she knew that nothing had crossed her lips since morning.

There had been long silence while Philip ate and drank, his attention wandering frequently from the food till Channah with a watchful word recalled his wits.

“Channah,” he said suddenly, “when will she die?”

She was startled. Her cup clattered on the saucer.

“Philip!” she said, in remonstrance.

“Channah,” he repeated, “tell me, when will she die? That’s what I want to know, how long is there?”

He was speaking in regular, subdued tones, with hardly an inflection in his voice. It seemed the voice almost of one talking in his sleep. An instinct commanded her to remonstrate no further, to fall in at once with this strange mood, to adopt his tones, to reply with no equivocation.

“Not long. Three days ago the doctor said she’d last a week. Yesterday he said she couldn’t last above two or three days. But only think—if it had happened before you came back!”

The last consideration made no impression. “Not more than two or three days more?” he repeated.

She nodded.

“That was yesterday?” he said. “So to-morrow is the latest.”

“To-morrow is the latest.”

“Mother will die to-morrow. The day after to-morrow she will be dead. What is the day after to-morrow?”

“To-day’s Friday. It’ll be Sunday!”

His voice gathered urgency. “Boys must go to funerals?” he demanded.

"They must," she said, "they always do! We don't go," she added. "You must go for us!"

"There will be no mother the day after to-morrow?"

"Philip," she wailed, "why must you go on like that? I can't bear it! It's been bad enough, but this is worse. You're looking and talking so funny I can't make you out. Go on with your tea, it's getting cold! I'll put in some tea from the teapot, shall I?" She hastened to the fire on unsteady feet.

"Cold," he was repeating, "the day after to-morrow!"

She left the fire and crossed over to him. "Philip, don't!" she implored. She shook him by the shoulders as if he were relapsing into dangerous sleep.

He blinked. There was a grinding in his head like a clock running down. "Poor old Channah, I'm sorry! I was hungry and it's made me dizzy. What a pig I've been! What have I been saying?"

"It's all right, I was only joking!" she assured him. "Be a good old boy, now, Philip, and have some more tea! You can't make things any better by not eating!" she insisted, "So let's try and be sensible!"

"Oh, it's all right, Channah! You just get on with your own, I've had enough. I can't stay away any longer. You've been attending to her all this time, while I've been—I've been——" he paused and grimaced, "I've been enjoying myself. I must go in straight away. You keep on with your tea."

But as soon as he closed the kitchen door behind him, she fumbled for her handkerchief in her blouse and withdrew to the scullery, her shoulders rocking.

He was only slightly conscious of the people that came in to see how she was and of his father sitting speechless in the corner, and Dorah busy with one

thing and another. He resented the appearance of the doctor and his cursory examination of her, the negative shaking of his head towards Reb Monash. What was there still to be done? What need was there to underline so black, so ineluctable a fact? Perhaps if he had more frequently envisaged the possibility of her death formerly, even in the face of her lying so wasted on the bed before him he might have dared to entertain a wild flicker of hope. But having only in dreams seen her dead hitherto, and then with such indignation and terror even in the depths of his subconscious heart that he would awake fighting the dark, now the pulse of his soul was smothered in an icy certitude, and he would allow no forlorn gleam of hope to lead him away from her, from this last intense communion of which the sands were running out, moment by ashen moment.

There was a murmuring like wings about their heads and about them the shuffling of clumsy feet attempting to achieve a vain silence. Sometimes he would find Reb Monash hanging over them, or Channah and Dorah whispering together. One of them might smooth a pillow or lift a spoon to her lips. And though he knew that these things were happening within the same four walls as contained his mother and himself, in the limitless egotism of his grief it seemed to him that walls far other than these held them in a remote world, together, inseparable, undisturbed.

Imperceptibly day had thickened into dusk and dusk into night. The incandescent mantle chuckled and flared unevenly. The last neighbour had tearfully withdrawn. He knew that several times Dorah had spoken to him and that he had answered, yet with no knowledge of the words his lips were actually shaping. At last he realized that both his sisters were urging him to

go away, to go to bed. Channah was trying to draw him from the chair where he sat leaning over the bed.

"No, no, I'm not going!" he said.

"But you must go! Channah and I . . ." started Dorah.

"Go!" said Channah, "only for a few hours!"

"I tell you I've been away all these days and I'm not going away for a second now! Let me be quiet, both of you! You go to bed! Can't I see you've been up every night, while I've been sleeping in comfort over there, not knowing anything!" He dropped his voice to a tone of appeal. "*Do* let me stay! If she wants anything, I can manage it. Dorah, you ought to go up to be near father!" He found himself dimly conscious for the first time since his return of his father's pallor, his ghost-like silence. The vague picture of his father faded away.

"I'll go for two or three hours!" said Dorah.

"When I come down, you must go up at once!" Her lanky figure bent awkwardly over Mrs. Massel. Her thin lips touched the forehead fleetingly. Channah threw herself down on her knees beside the bed and babbled incoherent words.

"Go thou, go, my own one!" murmured her mother. "Thou hast not slept—how long! Go, darling, sleep, sleep!"

There followed silence after the women had withdrawn. Not a word passed between his mother and Philip. Sometimes she would close her eyes for some minutes, then open them once more full and deep upon her son's. He remembered how Time had been so dilatory in the train; how he had wanted hours to shrivel into minutes, the long minutes to be brief as a spark. Now Time moved too swiftly, with deadly deliberate speed.

Beyond the parlour window and high beyond the houses on the other side of Angel Street, he heard the galloping of horses and the abateless revolutions of wheels. Oh, that the moments could expand into hours, and the hours once more into the years in which he had loved her so little and she had loved him so well, so well despite the danger that lay between and the cloud that had always enveloped them.

But now at least there was no danger, no cloud; nothing hindered their unity. The whispering of Doomington, that ceased not even in a snow-muffled winter midnight, now on all sides withdrew, leaving the dim parlour in Angel Street aloof and calm. The incandescent light choked and spat no more. A still light, steadier than the moon, less garish than the tree-shaded twilight of glades, invested the room, converting each object there into a significance beyond ugliness and beauty. All accidentals of space and birth and time were stripped from the woman on the bed, from the boy at her side. She was the mother, he was the son, nothing more. There was a pulsation in the air, between them and about them, linking them though they were far apart as Aldebaran and the Earth, though she lay crumbling under her wooden lid and he strode sun-engirdled over the morning hills.

How long this thing lasted the boy did not know at all, for he did not even know that it came. He only knew that Channah was peering round the door, fearful of waking them if they had fallen asleep. She wondered how it came that his face was shining as with dawn, though still the night was deep and the black incandescent gas flared and gasped. She wondered also at the smile which lay curled at the edges of her mother's lips. She saw, at one moment, how his eyes looked calmly towards hers, and how the next moment his head had

fallen limply on his breast. She came forward swiftly to prevent him slipping to the ground.

He awoke to find himself lying under a blanket in his own former bedroom, whither, he learned later, Dorah and Reb Monash had lifted him. He stared unseeing for some time into the blotched ceiling, then the words came tolling against his ears, "The Last Morning! The Last Morning!" He did not at once seize the meaning of the phrase. He knew merely that this morning was to be an ending of things. But when the phrase became particularized, *whose* last morning had dawned, slowly he rose from his bed as a doomed man for the gallows.

It was morning. The blind had been drawn, but they had left the gas feebly talking in the incandescent burner. Shadowy people had already gathered in the lobby and there were several neighbours in the parlour. Reb Monash was standing over her bed listening to the faint words she was endeavouring to shape. A flicker of jealousy touched the boy's heart.

"Monash," she said, "it is *shabbos*, yes?"

"*Yah*, Chayah, the Holy Day!"

"Ah, *gutt*, *gutt*!"

She could say no more. He observed how the neighbours would make way to give each other the privilege of being within the dying woman's room for some minutes. Death seemed to be in the room with all the actuality of physical presence. He seemed to be standing over Philip's head leaning dark branches about him like a tree. . . . No, he would not let the futile gas burn there while the sun, while even the warped sun of Doomington, shone into the room! What were all these people doing here, treading softly in and out? Did they hope that she would carry a brief for their souls into that country whither she was shortly adventuring?

The clock! the clock! How it ticked relentlessly on the mantelpiece, a large, round alarm clock with a pale face!

Channah was whispering. "I think she wants you!" He brought his ear close to his mother's lips.

"*Shabbos*," she said, "the Holy Day! Before *shabbos* goes, I am no more, son mine!"

Should he say—the words were almost on his lips—"Mother, mother! The sun's shining! You will be strong yet! That dress of satin I always wanted to buy you, I will buy you soon. You will sit in the parlour like a queen, only making cakes sometimes, for *yom tov*! I will take your arm and we will go out into the green fields. Birds, mother! And blossom on the trees! Even yet, mother, even yet!" There was no time for lovely, false hopes. He said not a word, but she knew how he was closer than he had been since the days when he lay, a fluttering lifeless life, under her heart.

The clock! The clock! There was a whispering, a treading. Some one had arrived. They bent to his ear and said, "It's from the *shool*. Some one has come to say the 'Hear, O Israel!' Let him be near!"

Channah took him by the arm. "Come to the door. Just while the man's there! Come!"

A low wailing rose from the room. "Oh God, Channah," he cried, "Oh, why do they make all this ceremony out of dying! Why can't they let her lie quietly? Did you hear how her breathing went heavier? She wants to die, she's so tired! And they won't let her! Oh, listen to them, send them away! Let's be alone with her!"

The shadow in the room when they returned seemed palpable. He could make out no sound, no appearance clearly, save her face, and the laboured breathing. And the clock! always ticking, dispassionately, relentlessly!

Always the clock ! A rattling in her throat complicated her breathing.

"Channah," said the boy, "Channah, look at the clock !" His voice was hard, mechanical. "It's a quarter to nine. At nine o'clock she'll be dead !"

"Feivele !" his father whispered. "She's said thy name ! Go !"

"Mother, lovely, I'm here ! What wilt thou ? Ah, see, I'm here !"

"Thou wilt be, Feivele, say it—thou wilt be always a good boy ? And think . . . of thy mother ? Thou sayest yes ?"

"Yes, *mutter meine*, yes !"

"And love Channah ? And all, all ? So, I am happy ! Remember, thou, Feivele !"

The clock stealing, stealing forward ! Not the banded powers of Heaven shall hold the clock-finger from moving forward over that space black with doom ! Tick-tock ! wild eyes of Channah, Dorah wringing her hands ! Tick-tock ! bearded face of Reb Monash, wrapped like a forest in its griefs ! Tick-tock ! a wailing in the air like trees when the wind goes about mournfully ! Tick-tock ! the rattling in her throat ! Oh, the falling chin, the glazing eye, Oh, dead, dead . . . ! Tick-tock . . . ! tock. . . . !

Waters flowing over his head where he lay prostrate on the beach ! Dark green engulfing waters drowning him beyond grief or tears ! Tricklings through his nostrils and oozings along the channels of his brain, runlets boring through the drums of his ears, surge after surge gurgling over his lips and into the bursting throat ! And how bitter the taste of the foam, encrusting his palate with a scurf of salt, bitter as ashes,

as sand ! A low desolate bell swinging ceaselessly in this world of sunken waters, as if the doom of oceans and lands had been pronounced, and all souls must bestir themselves, howsoever long ago they were clad in flesh !

And always a whispering, and a secret sound of feet even so low under the water's rim, whither no sun attained, where the bell swung to and fro in the lapse of glooms. The fantastic denizens of these waters ! Things with large phosphorescent eyes shedding tears that flickered down the watery darkness like worms of fire ! Things with shuffling feet and lolling heads, bearded things with wise and cavernous skulls, and one, shaped like a small woman, appearing, disappearing, busy on important offices beyond all scrutiny ! They would stand over him, staring with meaningless kindness through the weeds which swayed and swung over his body. They would endeavour to lift his hands from their laxity to receive the offerings they brought, would lift their offerings to his lips, but too bitter was the savour of brine on his tongue and his head too weary ! He would turn away from them, burying his face in the clammy sands. There had long been a filtered light in the waters which engulfed the world ; the light thickened into opaque walls. He could see no more the lolling heads, that busy strange woman who came and went. Only darkness, and for how long ! Even the bell was muffled almost to nothingness, the bell was more a sense than a sound, the bell seemed to be tolling from the depths of his own body where he lay unstarred, tolling from below his bones and making the arm which lay across his breast lift and fall away. Once more the light returning and the sound of feet and the bell louder tolling, louder and ever louder, until the metal against which the tongue beat and clamoured,

burst into a thousand fragments, and he knew that he shook with sobs !

Over him stood the busy woman ; Mrs. Finberg she was, the shroud maker, officiator at deaths. She waited till the hollow sobbing subsided, then pressed on him hot cup of tea. This time he did not refuse, did not turn his head and bury it in the escaping stuffing of the sofa.

After some moments he rose and opened the kitchen door. He found Channah proceeding towards the lobby.

“ When will it be, Channah ? ” he asked, “ Is it arranged ? ”

“ When will what be ? ”

“ You know, the funeral, I mean ! ”

“ It won’t be more than a few hours now ! ”

“ But I don’t understand ! Not more than a few hours ! What’s the time now ? ”

“ It’s just after nine ! ”

“ Nine o’clock ? But she died at nine o’clock ! ”

She drew back frightened. “ But that was *yesterday* ! ”

“ *Yesterday* ? Oh, what’s the matter with me ? Is it Sunday just now then ? ”

“ Of course it is ! It was *shabbos* yesterday ! ”

“ Of course, of course ! ” He began to apprehend how time had been annihilated for him. “ Of course it’s Sunday ! What was I talking about ? And you say it’s in a few hours then ? ”

“ The man from the burial society has just been in. He says the cabs’ll come about two, he thinks ; somebody said that funerals are the only things that Jews are in time about. Oh, Philip, Philip, they’ll not be late ; what does it matter when they come ? ”

“ Oh, so there’ll be cabs ? ”

“ Yes, there’ll be cabs ! ”

"And there'll be—you know—a hearse?"

"What do you keep on asking these questions for? Of course there must be!"

"What's all those heavy noises for, in the parlour? What is it they're moving about?"

"Don't, Philip, don't! Come back into the kitchen!"

"It's the coffin! Isn't it the coffin?"

The parlour door was flung open suddenly. With her hair escaped from the pins, her hands beating wildly, there stood Dorah, crying shrilly, with broken catches! "Come here, Channah, Philip! Come, look at her for the last time! Quick, quick, it'll be too late!"

Channah clung back against him.

"We must go!" Philip whispered. "Poor old girl, let's go!"

All but her face was covered where she lay, the lid revealing the calm head. The room was full of unchecked sobbing. Grief was round her like a whirlpool. How calm she lay at its centre, unperturbed, serene! A woman was tearing her hair, Dorah beating her breast savagely! Reb Monash stood heaped against a corner, his head drooped upon his breast. Channah, her shoulders convulsively shaking, lay clasped in a woman's arms. Philip looked tearless upon his mother's tearless face. *She* knew how to take Death quietly, like a queen! The tinge of yellow had gone from her cheeks. They were only white now, placidly white. Never before had her face been so wise and sweet. Oh, the queenly lady . . . mother as never before!

"Go out now, you must go out!" a voice said.

"Never, never! You'll never take her away!" Dorah shrieked, but the woman led Dorah out, and Channah after her. For one moment Reb Monash and Philip remained in the room, the body between them. Then they too went.

Little trickles faltered down the kitchen windows, dulling the light already so meagre. Philip looked out into the yard and saw a slow drizzle falling miserably. The ground would be sodden, out there. He shivered. A chill rain faltered within him as he turned away, a drizzle soaking his heart till it was sodden like the cemetery out along the paved roads, somewhere at a corner of Doomington. As he sat motionless, a man approached him and asked him to unfasten his coat. With leaden fingers he obeyed. The man seized his waistcoat a little distance above the first button-hole and held it taut with the left thumb and first finger. A razor in the right hand made a two-inch incision. The canvas threads sprawled from the gap like exposed nerves.

When the first cab came crunching along Angel Street, he observed with abstract interest how the wheels, though superficially they seemed to be arrested outside the front door, still went heavily revolving towards his ribs and crunched them below their passing, till he could hardly breathe for the sharp bits of bone sticking in his chest. Other vehicles followed. Two cabs had been subscribed for and sent by the *Polisher Shool* to express the sympathy and respect of the congregation. One or two other synagogues which had witnessed Reb Monash's oratorical triumphs paid a like tribute, and there was, of course, a quatum provided by the burial society out of the Sunday fund to which Reb Monash had contributed from the first week of his arrival in Doomington, as knowing that though his family's living might be a doubtful affair, of death's coming, soon or late, there could be no doubt.

Some one told him that his father, the *parnass* and the *gabboim* of the *Polisher Shool* were already installed in the leading cab. They were waiting for him. A lethargy had been creeping about his brain. "Wasn't

there any way of getting out of it ? Why must he go ? Why must any one go ? Wasn't it finished, finished beyond recall ? ”

Dorah sat on the sofa swaying regularly from side to side. He heard the crying of Channah, hidden somewhere.

“ Go thou, go ! ” moaned Dorah.

He staggered through the front door. A swift wave of sympathy from the red-eyed crowd in the street surged towards him. A horrible self-consciousness afflicted him and he wilted like a leaf before a flame.

“ What a lovely funeral ! ” he heard somebody mutter. . . .

He heard the clinking of coins in a tin box. He remembered. There was no wedding, no funeral where the *shammos* was not to be seen, clinking his box for the poor.

But the clinking faded from his ears when he discovered with a swift stare of recognition the tin can at the pavement's edge. “ *Orummer ingel !* ” a woman cried, lifting her voice, “ Poor lad ! ” The words grated. He was glad to find himself in the dark shelter of the cab, crushed in among the men.

As the procession moved away, he knew that Dorah stood on the steps of the house, beating her hands together, shouting ; that Channah seemed to run after them like a ghost ; she tottered, and the capable arms of women had seized her, were bearing her away. The hearse turned the corner of Angel Street. The cabs followed.

Still a passionless stupor held him as they moved along Doomington Road and up Blenheim Road, through Longton, beyond the outskirts of the Jewish quarter, and to Wheatley at last, where the Jewish cemetery straggled over the low slope of a hill and the

tombstones bore meekly the inquisitions of the passing trams.

The entrance into the cemetery was a wooden, draughty shed where a few Prayer Books were lying about on the forms. The shed was rapidly filling. In addition to those whom the cabs had brought were a number who had travelled by tram. Soon he found a service beginning and himself mechanically joining in prayers. And shortly after he was moving out into the open with the rest, into the damp air. They were moving along the uphill winding path to the cemetery. The clay underfoot was difficult for treading. The atmosphere was full of the smell of turned earth. After one or two minutes the untidy procession paused and the *chazan* who was officiating at the funeral continued the wailing chant. Again they moved forward and again they stopped; the chant was resumed, until at last they were among the graves. There were uprooted weeds, removed by the caretaker from privileged graves, lying in dank heaps, tainting the tainted air and tangling the narrow walks among the dead.

This was the place then, this black, deep hole? The rain was drizzling into the grave. If they waited too long, there would be a floor of clayey water. It was a deep hole; who had thought that graves were so deep? It was true that no disturbance from the harsh world above would penetrate so far; but if the grave were a little less deep, there would be communion with the roots of flowers, almost the tiny pattering of birds' feet.

So he mused, hardly conscious of the solemn chanting and the sobbing about his ears, until some one whispered that he must throw a clod of earth into the grave, on to the coffin lid.

Even this, then? No release, no hope! A lump of earth fell dully from his father's hand. Light would

the earth be which her son threw on his mother's bed ! He lifted a fragment of clay and released it over the grave. But heavily the sound came, boomed on his ears. Others followed. He became aware of a new refrain in the threnody round him. " Beg for me, Chayah ! " " Beg for me, beg the Above One ! " they were shouting into the grave as the coffin disappeared below the rising earth. " Beg for me, Chayah ! "

He turned away. No more sound was heard of clay on naked wood. Terribly, silently, the level rose. The caretaker had seized the shovel and was piling more earth on the broken surface. Behind a tall white stone with black pillars a little distance away, hidden from the rest, Philip lay for some time, his face on the damp gravel, at last realizing how far from all reach they had placed her, beyond all language, all vision, at the roots of darkness, far from his twitching fingers. It was time for the mourners to descend to the shed for *minchah*. The *chazan* was getting restive.

But a few lingered among the stones, coming to read again the inscriptions over the graves of parents, children, friends, all equally dead in the Wheatley cemetery, all under the drizzle in uncomplaining company, all stretched quiet under the levelled clods, which other sons, fathers, friends had heaped on the coffin lids.

When the crowd had descended, he found Reb Monash sitting alone on a form against the wall. The *shammos* whispered to Philip that he must be seated alongside his father. Head swimming, he obeyed. And now came *minchah*, the afternoon service. Reb Monash turned up in a Prayer Book the *kaddish*, the special prayer of the bereaved. The isolation of their two voices frightened him, but he was conscious of a tense determination that no hitch should take place in this concluding ceremony, that she should be left, the

tired woman, at rest as soon as they would release her. He uttered the prayer with dead clarity.

Minchah was over. In dull wonder he realized that the *shammos* had unfastened his father's shoe laces and was unfastening his own. Reb Monash rose weakly and walked across the room and Philip followed. The crowd desultorily made way for them as they moved, their loose laces dragging in the dust. As they were fumbling once more with the tying of their laces, the black figures were flickering through the door into the road.

Who of the living shall stay in the place of the dead ? Let the dead hold such converse together as they can ! Day speeds to night and night will bring new day. An emptier day for empty eyes in this place and in that, but a new day none the less. Will not fresh waters be flowing from the mountain sources, and other waves hurtle against the shores ? It is only the caretaker's dog who prowls unhappily among the graves, wondering dimly at all this to-do. The caretaker himself wipes the clay from his weeding fork and sets to work again, whistling.

There was a self-satisfaction in the clatter of the horses' hoofs as the cabs made their way from the cemetery, an indication that having achieved their part of the day's burden satisfactorily, it was left to the humans they were carrying away to dismiss them as soon as decorum permitted. The drizzle persisted still. The tram-lines glistened evilly mottled among the bricks. With fitful abstraction Philip looked through the window into the drab day. The continuity of houses had not yet begun. Here and there stood a public house at a corner, or two or three houses thrown up in apologetic haste. The cabs overtook a man and a woman walking citywards in the same direction ; it seemed that when

the hearse came abreast of the man, a natural impulse made him remove his hat. The man stood gaping as the first cab approached, the woman staring curiously. Then suddenly she seized him by the shoulder and pointed a correcting finger towards the procession. She shouted something into his ears—the actual words were drowned in the rattle of wheels. The man gaped more foolishly, and at once, deliberately, replaced his hat. As the man and woman passed from Philip's sight, they were grinning significantly into each other's faces. The lad wondered what it meant. Quickly he was informed. The procession was now riding abreast of a piece of waste ground, sloping greasily up from the roadside level. Against the sky-line, faintly muffled by the intervening rain, Philip saw three or four youths standing, long-legged. He perceived that as soon as they became conscious of the funeral procession their lank immobility had stiffened, and that at once they proceeded to make derisive gestures with their arms and hands. When at last he realized the significance of their gestures he felt as though each had plunged a rusty knife into him. It was the movement he remembered on the part of a band of youths who two or three years ago had assembled outside the *Polisher Shool* to mock the old Jews entering on their *Yom Kippur* supplications. It was the movement which had sometimes greeted him in the meaner Gentile parts of Doomington, to an accompaniment of "smoggy van Jew!" Once Higson Junior had stood at the top of the stairs . . .

The rain was not too opaque to obscure their lips shaping, nor so dense that he could not hear the scornful implacable words—"Smogs! Look at the smoggy van Jews!"

"God!" he shouted, suddenly starting to his feet. The others calmed him, bade him sit down; to them it

seemed a spasmodic outburst of his grief. They had not noticed the gesticulating youths on the clay slope. Or perhaps the youths had not escaped their notice, but having passed this way before, the edge of the experience had been blunted for them by familiarity.

Philip as suddenly subsided, but the blood surged through him, wave after wave, in fierce anger. This, then, was the gentleness of Christ! These the countrymen of Shelley! For these Socialism schemed and poured its hot blood! Oh, God! The skunks! What would it matter if himself they stripped and threw stones at him, sent him bleeding home? Or if they filled with mud the mouths and nostrils of these old men about him? But they had desecrated Death itself, the dolorous quiet majesty of Death! They had desecrated *her*, the sleeping woman with the folded hands, the lips that should utter no more her sweet calm words, her eyes, sealed under disks of clay, that had been innocent as dawn!

He squirmed in his corner of the cab. They had desecrated her sleep, these minions of Christ! It seemed at that moment that no life henceforward lay before him excepting the shattering from His throne of the thorn-crowned Hypocrite, in whose service those long-legged blackguards jeered at Death. This mood passed quickly. A memory came to him of a picture he had seen somewhere, the eyes of Christ lifted in anguish, the heavy blood thickening about the wounds. But he felt that a bitter brew had been forced down his throat. A taste of crude salt lay in the hollow of his tongue.

The cab arrived at Angel Street. Dorah and Channah sat waiting in the kitchen on low stools, and low stools (on which alone the bereaved of a Jewish family may sit during the *shivah*, the seven days' mourning) were

set for Reb Monash and Philip. The neighbours had prepared some food, but Philip could not eat. Each mouthful became impregnated with the evil liquid flowing round his tongue. He was conscious of nothing but intense irritation and dared not trust himself to utter a word. He winced when a door opened, squeaking, and brutally he kicked the cat as it meowed into his face. When Channah put her hand on his forehead, he threw it off with a suppressed scream. He was annoyed that the women let the food lie about so long, and when they removed it, he was annoyed that they removed it so clumsily. A ring of hot metal seemed to lie behind each eye. He shut his eyes, but only set the rings rolling on their axes and throwing off sparks.

A sing-song monologue was drumming into his ears. One or two of Reb Monash's friends had come in and his father was narrating the virtues of the dead woman.

"*Oi*, such a wife!" he was moaning, "A Yiddish soul and good as gold! Nothing which it is right for a Yiddish woman to do, she did not do! No *mitzvah* was too hard for her! And on Friday night what a table it was! Not a speck on the tablecloth and the candles shining like the heavens! *Oi*, my buried Chayah! Where shall I find me such another one? Where, where? And on *yom tovvim*. . . .!"

The teeth of Philip's bitterness fastened close on this harangue. This was the first moment since his return from Wenton that he had become conscious of Reb Monash as a separate and complete entity. He had been irrelevant hitherto. Only his mother, living or dead, had occupied the full circle of his vision. There had been room for no one, nothing but her. The incident on the return from the cemetery had made a hole in the walls of his isolation, an acid had come trickling into him,

corroding him. What did the old man mean by this futility? What interest was all this to the nodding old fools on the sofa? Indeed, what interest were her virtues to the man himself, eulogizing her from the low stool, in the same chant he had heard often in the bygone years, rising fitfully from the room where the living woman lay sleepless and frightened in her bed?

"And what think you she would do? She would borrow money on her bracelets to lend to Yashka, the fisher's wife! And when a woman gave birth she would forget she was ill herself: she'd go out through the rain to make her some dainty and clean her floor! What a house she kept for me. . . .!"

It was intolerable! Would he never finish? Whither was he leading? Faster and faster revolved the wheels behind his eyes. He dug his nails into his hands and the voice proceeded evenly. He had stopped. No, it was to draw breath! He was proceeding again. This man his father? Oh, a stranger surely! They had lost sympathy enough, God knows, these years. But the man incanting now so monotonously, who was he, what was he doing here?

Philip found his own lips in motion. Reb Monash was silent and turned his head towards his son.

"You've found it all out now, have you?" he said. The voice was raw and dry, a voice he had never uttered nor heard before. Was it himself had asked that question, and himself who asked again with words that stabbed the tranced silence in which the room lay frozen—

"So you've found it out now that you've killed her?"

A blight seemed to fall on the lips of Reb Monash. They turned sick and grey. The colour spread along his cheeks. His eyes grew wider and dark and very sorrowful. Neither he nor his son seemed aware that

Dorah had advanced to the boy, her teeth showing large between her lips, that she lifted her hand to strike him, but the hand had failed suddenly, and she had sunk on a stool, sobbing. The eyes of Reb Monash still rested full on his son's, but his chin drooped lower on his breast. When he spoke, his voice echoed the raw dry tones that had left Philip's mouth.

"God knows, Feivele!" he said. "Perhaps thou hast right!"

His head shook unsteadily for some moments, then fell forward and downward like a lead weight.

"He's fainted!" shrieked Dorah.

"He's fainted!" Channah echoed. Dorah turned fiercely on Philip. Her fingers clawed the air.

"What have I done?" Philip said. "What was I saying?"

They flung the door open. Some one fumbled at the window frantically for a minute or two, then realized that the window could not open. With quick sobs of alarm Channah threw water into Reb Monash's face, while Dorah held his head to the air.

Reb Monash opened his eyes. "Where's Feivele?" he asked faintly.

"Here!" the boy whispered.

"Feivele!" said his father. "Feivele, let it be over! It has lasted too long!"

"Father, what meanest thou? I knew not what I was saying. . . ."

"No, that is finished; it is said! The fighting, let it be over! Go thine own way! If thou wilt come mine, some day far off, God be praised! But the fighting, let it be over! I am tired!"

The boy stared into his father's face. Memory after memory floated like vapours darkly over the seas of the past, interposed themselves between that sallow

face and his eyes. Then he saw the eyelids fail wearily. The memories drew away along the wide levels.

He knew what issue had been declared. They had suffered much and waited long, his father and he. To Death had fallen the decision of their conflict.

“Father, let it be over!”

The tension was only broken that night. Harry Sewelson came in and after a speechless, eloquent handshake, informed Philip that he had been away all yesterday and had learned of the death only a couple of hours ago. He had heard women discussing it over the counter in his father's shop. Alec and his family had left the town unexpectedly a few days ago or Alec would have come in too. . . .

People kept on crowding into the kitchen till the room was unbearably stuffy. Harry had relapsed into reverent silence in a corner. Philip was certain he would choke unless he went to the front door to breathe. He passed along the lobby and opened the door. At that moment old Serra Golda, who had just climbed the stairs, was about to knock, and even as her hand rose to the knocker, the door swung noiselessly inward. Her little puckered eighty-year-old face, caught faintly by the gleam of a street lamp, was distraught with fright. She uttered a slight screech of horror. Her beady eyes stared from her head in a manner intolerably ridiculous. A demon of laughter seized Philip overwhelmingly and a great raucous peal bellowed from his lips. He swayed impotently, hands waving in the air, each mouthful of laughter louder and more hideous than the last. The old lady bustled by him, muttering indignantly, “Thou loafer! such a year upon thee!”

The words only emphasized the insanity of his mirth. He managed to close the door and then stood in the

darkness of the lobby, beating his head on the wall in his transports. He felt his ribs cracking in the onslaught of laughter, and clasped his hands tight round his body.

He found Harry standing beside him.

"Good God! Philip!" he exclaimed. "It isn't seemly! How can you do it!"

For long Philip could shape no word. The tears streamed from his eyes. At last, with infinite difficulty, he brought out:

"Oh, hell, Harry, don't you understand? Don't you see . . . see how I'm . . ."

But the words were drowned in a fresh and prolonged peal. Harry walked away from him impatiently.

It was fortunate that *meyeriv*, the evening service, had been rendered and the *kaddish* intoned. Philip now realized clearly that the laughter was entirely out of his control and that it would be fatal to re-enter the kitchen. Although the main attack had subsided, bubbles of laughter still boiled in his throat and issued from his lips in ragged shrieks. Utterly prostrated, he determined that the only thing he could do was to go to bed at once, and he fell asleep with his own laughter ringing lamentably in his ears.

CHAPTER XV

THREE times daily for the following seven days, a little community, necessarily never less than ten adults, and frequently intersprinkled with a few of those more pious *chayder* boys who wished specially to commend themselves to their *rebbe*, gathered for *davenning* in the Angel Street kitchen ; the visitors on sofa and chairs, Reb Monash and Philip on low stools ; the mourners uttering their *kaddish*, the visitors chiming amen with devout promptitude.

Davenning, perhaps by some deliberate charitable intention, seemed to take up most of the day, and effectively chequered Philip's moods of stagnant melancholy with the need for definite action and a brave show in the eyes of the world. Benjamin, Dorah's husband, a meek, pale-haired man, whose will had always been a useful and docile implement in the hands of his wife, attended the *minyons* with complete regularity, a praiseworthy fact in virtue of the commercial travelling which took him into far outlying villages. Dorah herself returned to Longton, leaving Philip in Angel Street for the period of the *shiveh*.

After the first week the family was permitted to resume ordinary chairs, but for a whole month the unshaved cheeks of Philip Massel testified biblically to his loss. Yet *kaddish* was not at end. Three times a day for the ensuing eleven months the prayer was to be uttered in one synagogue or another. And year after year there-

after candles were to be lit on the eve of the anniversary of the death and *kaddish* three times uttered next day.

For the Jewish mind the prayer is invested with extreme sanctity. The birth of a son conveys to his father and mother immediately the glad tidings of "Thank God! a *kaddish* for our souls!" In a precisely similar manner to the purchase of a mass and for precisely similar reasons, a *kaddish*, by a childless man and woman, will be bought for money. There are, indeed, old men who shuffle about the dark spaces of a synagogue, whose main livelihood is the recital, at a stated rate, of the prayer. But, it is needless to insist, the commercial commodity is held to possess by no means the same efficacy as the consanguineous *kaddish*. Dereliction of duty in this matter is held to be a flagrant betrayal of the dead. The image is held before the culprit's eye of the body attempting to shake free from its bondage of worms and mud, and for lack of intercession before the throne of God, enchained cruelly within the narrow territory of the coffin.

The state in which Philip had endured the climax of his mother's illness, her death and funeral, had involved, it has been evident, less a storm of suffering than a trance, a deadly level of hysteria. When he returned from Angel Street to Longton, he seemed to lose his faculty for quick reaction, for poignant contrition or grief. His mind reduplicated the sooty autumn which spread like a web about the city, entrapping the last evidences of summer and leaving them to hang be-draggled like sucked flies.

Whether or no, for one who had at least made such pretensions of affection towards his dead mother, he ought, from the point of view of an abstract decency, to have persisted with the prayer to which she herself

had attached such importance, it is not easy to decide. It is possible that had he recited the *kaddish* in a language he understood, he would have persisted even to the end. On the other hand, it is possible that had he been faced with the task of reiterating for so long the same fixed number and sequence of words with their inelastic content of meaning, he would have defected even sooner: that, in fact, the mere unintelligibility of the prayer conferred upon it for a season the quality of the kabbalistic. But the essential fact is this, that the emotional part of him now flowed like a sluggish backwater, and in his emotion alone the ritual could have been steeped until it shone with beauty and urgency.

Only his mind moved with any clarity, and his mind had long ago decided that phylacteries belonged to Babylon, that all the terror of the Day of Atonement was an immense, an almost conquering hypnotism, from which with travail he had escaped. *Kaddish* was but an issue of the same quality as these, though more painful in its solution; for those others were related merely to the general problem presented to him by his race, whilst this was bound up so immediately with the lovely thing he had lost.

His first absence from the morning service at the little *shool* in Longton (his absences from the afternoon and evening services were not ostentatious and were therefore not commented on) produced a series of violent outbursts from Dorah, culminating in a threat that she would no longer allow him to pass her doors. When he informed her that he had had other struggles to determine and others still faced him, that he was too tired arguing the matter of *kaddish* with himself for any argument with her, that, in short, he would go, as she threatened, and become an errand boy or a clerk, her

anger relaxed. It was certain he was very worn out, and if he actually left the bosom of his family, his last tie with Judaism would be snapped, and—who knew? he might, God forbid, even marry a Gentile, a *goyah*! What a scandal it would be! Benjamin would lose his Jewish clientèle, it would shake Reb Monash's *chayder* to its foundations, and what would be thought of a *maggid* whose son . . . No, the matter was too terrible to think of! They must be patient, perhaps God would be kind even yet! Yet it was hard, very hard to bear! Not for all her resolutions could she stifle periodic outbursts of wrath. Philip would rise from the table with shut lips and retire to his room and his books.

Poetry had begun to lose its savour for him. Poetry tinkled. He discovered a volume of the *Poems and Ballads*. It mystified and annoyed him. He was in no mood for the sheer unrelated beauty of Keats, and Tennyson seemed fit only to read on a bench among the tulip beds of Longton Park. His feet held him too heavily to the ground to allow, with Shelley, any excursion into the empyrean. As yet it was an atmosphere too rare for him to breathe again; there was too much of the graveyard damp in his lungs. The equilibrium of "Ulalume" and "The Raven" filled him at first with indignation and then with mere mirth.

The routine of school made as yet hardly any break in the even tenour of his mind. Mr. Furness uttered a few words of sympathy, so quiet and unobtrusive that without scraping the wound they gave to Philip a sense of ease and understanding more than all the rhymed consolations of the poets. With Browning he had more success, and though the robust exuberance of the poet was out of harmony with Philip's prevailing mood, here

at least was stuff of the earth earthy, sound stuff for his jaws to tackle with pertinacity. But the discovery he made which nearest met his mood was the discovery of prose. With fiction, of course, he had always been familiar. But this was no more prose in a strict sense than Pope was poetry. Each existed for a purpose beyond its medium, Dickens for his tale and Pope for his precept. But when he casually picked up at a handcart in the Swinford market a copy of the *Religio Medici*, chiefly for a melancholy delight in its mere odour of antique must, and thus casually stumbled on a music which had more than the subtlety of verse, and none of its arbitrary divisions, he was carried away upon an untravelled sea. The "Urn Burial" he chanted night after night. The *History* of Clarendon and the *Compleat Angler* were a similar experience, the mere narrative of the first and the piscatorial erudition of the other affecting him as not truly relevant to the prose in which they were written, being merely moulds to give their music one shape instead of another shape. He moved lazily towards the more troubled seas of Swift and was suddenly tossing helplessly in those furious waters; until release allowed him to seek amiable harbourage with Dick Steele and, disregarding lordlily an intervening century, in the pleasant coves of Lamb.

It was not that the agony of those summer days, the telegram at Wenton, the cemetery, the words he had uttered in Angel Street and their consequence, were submerged quickly or in the least. For long, periods of listless vacuity clogged Philip's feet and mind. He would sit musing for hours over an unfinished meal or stand in prolonged and joyless reverie before a hardware shop. The slow blood in his veins called for no action. No dream of sky or hills was potent enough to

prick his limbs with desire to be moving beyond the bounds of the city and along the climbing roads. So for a time these voyages with the learned and dead doctors of prose were the only adventures of his soul.

Almost with the first quickening of spring, something of the old unease twitched his body. He realized that his friend Alec, from whom no word had come to him, had not once entered his mind; that even Harry, upon whom he had stumbled several times, had in no wise concerned him. He had seen him once or twice with a lady. Details of her had not impressed themselves upon him. He knew only that she seemed ten or twenty years older than his friend, and a plain woman; distinctly, a plain woman. He determined to call for Harry and suggest a tram ride into the country.

"I'm sorry," Harry had said awkwardly. "I'm afraid I can't! I'm quite fixed up. I never have time to go with any one else."

"I beg your pardon," said Philip huffily, "really I shouldn't like to intrude! It just occurred to me that we used to have something to do with one another not so very long ago. I think I'd best not keep you any longer now."

"Philip, try and be a sport, if you can!" Harry entreated. "My time's not my own. You're not old enough yet, so you can't possibly understand! No offence meant!"

"What's the good of crowing about—what's your haughty age—nearly eighteen? It's a privilege bought by mere waiting!"

"Of course I could trust you to misunderstand. The fact is there's every chance of my getting—for God's sake don't tell a word to any one—", he dropped his voice and looked carefully round, "of my getting married!"

"Good God, man, you're a baby! Don't be a fool!"

"Oh, don't try that game on me! I'm old enough for marrying, if I'm old enough to be a father. Don't look so startled! I don't mean to say that I am. That's the trouble! Yes, it was a pretty sound instinct that prevented me from going round to see you, even when they kept her in after hours! I see the sort of sympathy I could have expected!"

"But who on earth is it?"

"Didn't we see you somewhere or other about ten days ago when we were together?"

"Do you mean that——?"

"Yes, that's Miss Walpole!" he said austere-ly.

"The trouble is that we can't really decide if I am the father actually or not!" he went on in a sudden burst of confidence. "But the baby's due before long and there's only one thing left for a decent chap to do. That's apart entirely from the fact that the girl means everything to me now!" he said with assumed airiness.

"Don't be so bloody, Harry!" Philip burst out. A clearer vision of the lady presented itself to him than when she passed before him in the flesh. "She's a hag of eighty!"

The face of the infatuated youth turned white with wrath. "I think the sooner you take your filthy face through that door the better! You and your blasted impertinence!"

Dignity demanded a frigid and immediate withdrawal.

"I'll be damned!" Philip murmured, "a chap with a mind like Harry's! Lord, it was as hard as a knife! Poor old devil, I suppose he'll wake up in a month and find himself up to the neck! Who's left? That's what I want to know! All the old landmarks are washed away. What the hell is a chap to do? Who's left?" The question drummed insistently into his ears.

He found himself aching for friendship. For the last few months he had hardly uttered a word excepting a request for the sugar, perhaps, and a reply to a question at school. His general friendlessness filled him with humiliation. The Walton Street phase had drawn to its dull end long ago and not a figure remained who offered the least hope of companionship. Alec, like the callous swine he had always felt Alec fundamentally to be, had merely disappeared—bearing with him the telescope of high romance, as might have been expected. On Harry the gods had inflicted a terrible cerebral affliction. Philip remembered Harry's attendant lady and shuddered. And Harry had been sweet on Edie once! Oh, yes, Edie! What was it he had heard Dorah and Benjamin saying about Edie? He remembered. Her photograph had been seen by a "millionaire" in the house of a relative of Edie in Pittsburg, U.S.A. The "millionaire," promptly enamoured, had entered into negotiations with the authorities in Doomington, the negotiations were succeeded by a trunk of the most astounding dresses and a first-class ticket to Pittsburg. So much for Edie! In any case she had worn thin ages ago. Then it was that Mamie returned to his mind.

His first thought was "Damn that girl! I thought I'd forgotten her!" She filled him with a vivid sense of guilt. "I've had enough!" he vowed. His mind returned to the episode of the signature, and to escape his contrition, he fled from the house and walked swiftly down Blenheim Road. To his horror he discovered that every step he took was actually a step nearer the enchantress. To his horror he was forced to recognize that the thought of her made him tingle with pleasure. The recollection of her began to torture him. It was a double infliction, sensations of guilt and promptings of

delight struggling for mastery. When his mind returned to his mother, his despair was more abandoned than it had been since the summer. Yet ever when his gloom was most profound, the girl re-entered his thoughts, whistling as she turned the corner of the barn, brushing his cheeks with her hair.

"By God!" he exclaimed. "I lent her that prose translation of Dante!" (He remembered that she had asked who had wrote Dante, and that she had thought it so *delincate* of him to lend her so *sweet* a book. And when she'd just finished the Pansy Bright-eye Library she was reading, she'd *love* to learn all about this here Dante. She was sure he'd be *that* interesting!)

Which lack of culture had then rather accentuated than diminished her charm, a quaint sort of sophisticated naïveté. "Of course, I've got to get my book back! I'll call for it to-morrow night!"

He knocked firmly at the door of the Mamie household. A miniature version of Mamie appeared. He asked if Philip Massel could see Miss Mamie. . . . The child disappeared into the sitting-room half-way along the passage. A whispering which seemed to last many minutes followed. Then the child reappeared and ushered him into the room. The glare of an admirable incandescent mantle blinded him for a moment. There were three or four people in the room but immediately he only recognized Mrs. Hannetstein. A familiar voice addressed him.

"Oh, good evening, Mr.—er—Massel, so glad you've called!"

He turned to the source of the voice. Good heavens, was that Mamie? Hell, she'd got her hair up! You couldn't quite compare her to Harry's discovery, but she was *years* older than she had seemed! He was aware she had called him Mr. Massel. He would have to follow

suit. Perhaps it was mere intrigue. He held out his arm waveringly. "Good evening, Miss . . ." He found, to his despair, he had entirely forgotten her surname. "I mean, Miss . . ." He coughed unhappily. But Mamie, so far from assisting him in his embarrassment, was unaware of it.

"Mother, this is Mr. Massel! We met, where was it? Oh, of course, in Wenton. Do you remember this gentleman, auntie? He helped me to escape from some cows, didn't you?"

"Yes," he managed to stammer, "and they were ravenous as wolves! I was awfully brave!"

Everybody laughed politely.

"I was just going to practise my latest song, 'Red Hearts, Red Roses.' Do sit down, won't you?" Mamie pressed.

"Thank you!"

"So glad you've come, but you don't mind my practising this song before my accompanist comes, Mr. Mendel, you know, the famous violinist!"

"Ah, Mamie, ah!" exclaimed her aunt waggishly, shaking the first finger of her left hand in humorous admonition.

"Don't be silly, auntie!" Mamie cried with a skittishness almost elderly. She sat down at the piano, and struck a few chords. Then Red Hearts bled, Red Roses drooped for some minutes.

Philip sat stiffly on his chair, wondering at the precise reason that had brought him here. He wished she hadn't put her hair up. He wondered dimly if he was in love with her. If he was, he supposed he ought to keep his eyes glued on her face in a peculiarly tense way. But it was distracting to see her lips moving in that active manner—like red mice, twisting!

"Oh, by the way," said Mamie at the conclusion of

her song. "I was sorry to hear of your loss. Mrs. Kraft told me. It must have been awfully unpleasant!"

"It was rather rotten!" Philip muttered with difficulty.

What a peculiarly unreal air the girl gave to sorrow and death. Inexplicable creature! Was this politely tittering oldish young lady the girl whose lips had sought his own like a bee? What was the matter with him now, or what had been wrong then? His own pose on the chair, the piano, everything was strained, a little false. But over in Wheatley, the cemetery, the grave, *there* was no unreality! Damp clay and the sprawling weeds! No, he must wrench his mind away from Wheatley, or he'd never be able to peel the apple that was lying in a plate on his knees.

"To be sure," said Mrs. Hannetstein comfortably, "Death comes to us all sooner or later! Don't you think so, Mr. Massel?"

There seemed no reason to repudiate the assertion.

Conversation trickled in a thin stream. Philip was conscious of a certain slight unease in the air. Wasn't it about time he was going? It certainly was time he set about doing what he came to do. Then what on earth was it he had come for?

There was a loud knock at the door. "That'll be Adolf!" declared Mamie, rising from the piano stool with a glad yelp. "Run to the door, Esther!"

A masterly tread was heard along the lobby.

"There you are, darling!" said Mamie, as a tall fair gentleman opened the door, and stared possessively into the room. "Won't you put your violin down first?"

He put his violin down in a corner with deliberation and as deliberately caught Mamie in his arms. That ceremony over, he sat down and blinked inquiringly towards Philip.

"Adolf, dear, this is a young gentleman who was staying in Wenton when I was there!" said Mamie, with vague discomfort.

"Very glad to meet him, to be sure!" said Adolf.

"Mr. Massel, this is Adolf Mendel, the violinist! My fiancé," she added with a note of deferential pride.

Her fiancé . . . then she'd . . . her *fiancé*. . . !

The blustering, big-boned lout, what the devil did he mean by taking everything for granted in this gruff cocksure way! Had *he* ever sat with her in the angle of a barn and a haystack, kissing like hell! Had her eyelashes ever . . . and her lips . . .

And she there, the vampire, what did *she* mean by it! Oh, blast her and the whole empty-headed crowd of them with their Red Roses and squeaky violins!

Anyhow, thank God, it was over! She'd pricked the bubble of his insufferably stupid illusion! In her degree and kind she'd gone the way of all the rest—Edie, Alec, Harry! What an idiotic room it was, with its refined knick-knacks on the mantelpiece and that creature with her hair up and the red-plush-framed photograph of Blackpool on the piano! They were discussing music and songs with a wealth of ostentatious esoteric detail. That was obvious enough surely. They wanted him to clear. He rose to go. Mamie perceived it with alacrity from the corner of her eye.

"Oh, I'm so sorry you've got to go!" she said effusively. "And I'm awfully sorry about that too, *you* know! You will come round again? Shan't he, Adolf, you'd *love* to see Mr. Massel again! Not at all, not at all; oh, *good* night!"

On the other side of the door he remembered his translation of Dante.

"Blast Dante!" he exclaimed through his teeth.

It was the fit of profound misogyny which followed this entirely unsatisfactory incident that fitted him so completely for the effusiveness and glitter of Wilfrid Strauss, and for that interlude with Kate which, only too conventional in its mere detail, was nevertheless at once the end and the beginning of Philip Massel's boyhood.

CHAPTER XVI

A CERTAIN hesitancy checks me upon the appearance of Wilfrid Strauss in this narration; even though I am aware how easy and profitable it is to philosophize upon the *deus ex machina*; how it is entertaining to demonstrate that from the flimsiest accidentals the most stalwart essentials depend. Yet the Wilfrid Strauss phase in Philip's development is not so much to be considered a stalwart essential as an exact statement of accounts, a period, a signpost whose backward arm pointed to obscure chaos, whose forward arm pointed at least to clearer issues, more breadth, more light. It is probable that one Strauss and another had from time to time come into some sort of contact with Philip, for in such communities as Whitechapel, Brownlow Hill and Doomington, from the turbid mass of Jewish tailordom a type perpetually emerges which is volatile, swift, scornful of the mere labour of hands, ostentatious of the agile intellectual qualities which make the type invaluable for undertakings rarely entirely scrupulous. If previously, then, Philip had encountered a Strauss in embryo or in maturity, there was no point at which their respective strengths and weaknesses had met. Yet, in point of fact, it is Eulalie et Cie., Paris, of undefined occupations, who have kept this particular and actual Mr. Wilfrid Strauss too busily engaged, on the Rue de Rivoli and in Leicester Square, for his appearance before this date in the lesser thoroughfares of Dooming-

ton. And it is not possible to declare that Strauss, as he swaggered gently down Transfer Street from the Inland Station, would have met Philip Massel on any other afternoon than the May afternoon in the year of Philip's history I have now attained.

Philip had hoped, earnestly enough, as his old associations faded more and more completely out of his life, to pass beyond the fog of strangeness which shrouded from him the heart and meaning of Doomington School. But he was forced to realize that volition was by no means adequate to achieve this purpose; for the paradoxical truth was borne in upon him, that, as he stood, he was somehow absurdly too young and inconceivably too old to take his place simply among the rest. The problem was to be resolved only by deliberate action, and action was wholly beyond his reach. He could drift sombrely with the tide of his own ineffectual melancholy, but the lassitude that softened his limbs prevented him from striking out against the current.

He fell into the habit, therefore, of following for long hours the similar roads of Doomington, the amorphous monster which had always stretched so vaguely, so inscrutably, beyond his own steely horizons. In one direction you reached the museum where the mummies were embalmed in such fatuous splendour; southward lay the University galleries where the skeleton of some immense, extinct beast swung terrifyingly from the roof. Northward the road led far and far away to a place where suddenly three chimneys sprang like giants against the throat of the sky. Or in the centre of the city, at the extremes of the bibliophilic world, were the handcarts whose books concerned themselves mainly with the salvation of your soul, and the plate-glass-windowed shops of Messrs. Dobrett and Lees and Messrs. Hornel, whose books were recommended as admirable

companions for your motor tours under the Pyrenees and your yachting cruises in the Mediterranean.

It was a lifeless youth, sick at heart, prematurely flotsam, he mourned, on the indifferent waters of life, who passed one afternoon under the shadow of the Stock Exchange, along Transfer Street and in the direction of Consort Square, where his defunct Highness stood isolated and unhappy among the conflicting currents of tramcars. But Philip saw nothing, heard nothing clearly, and paused not even a moment before the innumerable display of the latest Rhodesian novel behind the windows of Messrs. Dobrett and Lees' shop. A book swung vacantly between finger and thumb as he walked vacantly along. And he was so startled when a distinguished young stranger stopped him to ask a question that the book slipped to the ground. Not so much the sudden vision of what Philip conceived to be the most immaculate of grey tweeds as the easy refinement of the young gentleman's voice took him aback. Philip flushed and bent down towards the book.

"Oh, allow me, allow me!" said the stranger. "It was entirely my fault!" He stooped gallantly, lifted the book, and with a mauve silk handkerchief flicked off the Doomington dust.

"Thank you!" said Philip. "No, really, it was my fault! I forgot I was holding it!"

The other made a courtly gesture of remonstrance. "This is the way, isn't it," he repeated, "to Blenheim Road?"

Philip considered a moment. "It's rather complicated if you've not been there before. You see, you've first got to turn to the left. And then, let me see . . . Or you might take the car . . . But look here, I'm not doing anything special just now. If you'd like, I could . . ."

There was something attractively full-blooded about the stranger, though it was true that the gloss—there seemed hardly another word—the almost boot-polish perfection of his appearance, was a little overwhelming. It would be easy enough to put him on the Brownel Gap car which would lead him to the top end of Blenheim Road. Yet Philip felt somehow reluctant to disattach himself so promptly from the stranger, to allow him merely to merge into the tumult and mist.

“If I dared to encroach . . .” hesitated the polite young man. It was, of course, an unworthy sentiment, particularly in a Communistic bosom . . . and yet one could not help feeling that to be seen talking to a stranger of this calibre was rather a distinction. All the people he had rubbed shoulders with to-day, what dull faces they had, threadbare suits, dry lips mouthing “Cotton, cotton, cotton!” even to themselves! This young man was wearing the most smartly tailored of grey tweed suits, shoes of metropolitan brilliance, a velours hat whose ample brims shadowed, expensively, quick green eyes, a slightly squat nose, and lips attuned, as one might judge from a slight thickness and their broad curves, to Bacchic riot and to kissing, even, it might well be, to the more recondite pleasures of the flesh. The last thought checked Philip. Yes, there was something full-blooded to the verge of coarseness in that mouth! Wasn’t all this talk about taxis and one’s own little two-seater, a hell of a scooter, you know, just a little too ostentatious? After all, a gentleman in the complete sense of the word could deduce from one’s clothes, for instance . . .

The stranger interrupted himself suddenly, then stared at Philip with some intentness. Then he lifted his forefinger to his nose and asked “*Zog mir, bist a Yid?* Tell me, thou art a Jew?”

Not merely the intonation of the voice had changed, so that the cadence of Leicester Square had subtly become the chant of the *Yeshiveh*, but its very timbre was different, thicker, more ingenuous, infinitely more homely.

"*Ich bin!*" replied Philip, perhaps a little stiffly.

"So you're one of us then, eh? well, all's well! I want you to help me, kid!"

A note of *bonhommie* had entered the voice. "You say you *can* come along this way, can you? Good! Do you mind? I'm going to take you into my confidence, if you'll let me!"

Philip blinked. He felt a momentary difficulty in his breathing, as if he had been running. A little sudden, one might think. . . .

"What do you say to just getting in here for a moment till we see where we are?" They withdrew into the doorway of a block of offices. "The fact is, I've got a job which is going to keep me in and about Doomington for a few months and I don't know a soul in the place. To tell the truth, I've managed to avoid Doomington till now. . . . Now isn't that a tactful thing to say to a native! I suppose you *do* belong to the place, don't you? But look here, you don't mind me buttonholing you like this, do you now? Perfect stranger and that sort of thing!"

There was no doubt he was a thoroughly engaging young fellow. And at this moment Allen of the Sixth passed by, a celebrated swell so far as school swells went. Allen looked merely dowdy now, with his somewhat down-at-heel brown brogues and the silver braid round his prefectorial cap coming loose at the peak. Philip was sure that Allen had glanced a little enviously towards himself and with real respect at the stranger. But who could resist the dapper waist cunningly

conferred upon the young man by some prince of tailors ?

"It's very decent of you indeed !" Philip muttered. "I appreciate it. You know if I can be of any help at all, I'll be only too pleased !"

A grin extended the corners of the stranger's mouth. He almost ogled Philip as he replaced finger to ever-so-slightly-aquiline nose.

"A charming little speech, charming ! I'm developing my theories about you, so help me ! A lady's man, that's what *you* are, a regular lady's man ! One has met your type, you know, up and down the place !"

Philip was not over pleased by this invariable insistence on the part of strangers that he was a "lady's man," that he had a "way with him," that they had "met your type, you know, up and down the place !" He coughed a little awkwardly. "I hate women !" he declared with vivid retrospect and pained conviction.

The other laughed a little too loudly. "And a jolly good joke, ha, ha ! Hate women—gee, what an idea ! But more of the ladies anon ! Let's just settle the matter in hand !" He made a motion towards the suit case at his feet.

"Let me take your bag !" demanded Philip, with tardy politeness.

"Not for a moment ! It's quite light, anyhow. My real luggage is at the station and it's as much as I'm worth with Eulalie et Cie.—my employers, you know, Paris,"—he paused to give the information its exact importance,—“as much as I'm worth to let this little Johnny out of my hand, God bless it ! But listen, I've got something to ask you. Would you first tell me your name ? Pardon ? Massel ! Oh, yes ; good name, solid ! Here's mine !"

He tenderly replaced his bag between his feet and withdrew a card from an expensive leather case. "Wilfrid Strauss, *né* Wolfie, but don't tell any one! You can't sell ladies' vanities and gentlemen's—er—gentlemen's comforts, don't you know, with a name like Wolfie, can you now?"

Philip slightly demurred.

Strauss lifted eyebrows of fleeting disapproval. "*Wolfie*, impossible patronymic! Tell me now, I want to get into a Jewish boarding house. You see the Doomington trade is absolutely in Jewish hands and they're threatening to undercut . . . but don't let me talk shop! How about it? Blenheim Road is the sort of district, I understand? I don't generally associate myself with the Only Race, as you can perhaps appreciate, so to speak, but you're beginning to see the line of attack, eh?"

Philip pressed his shoulder blades against the wall to re-establish his sense of reality. "Quite so, quite so!" he replied weakly.

"You can be of help to me, old man, if you would? I mean, you know the local ropes and that's half the game!"

At least here was Strauss adumbrating interests definite, if not exalted, some sort of *terminus ad quem*. How nauseatingly void and vain had life in Doomington become!

Strauss proceeded. "Another thing! I've developed a sudden consuming passion for, what d'you call 'em, *creplach*, absolutely soaked in *shmaltz*, you know the sort . . . and potato *blintsies* . . . and let me see, there's *mameliggy*, um, yes, *mameliggy*!"

Memories of the curiously-flavoured Roumanian dish as served on special occasions by Mrs. Sewelson vividly presented themselves.

"Oh, so you're a Roumanian, Mr. . . . I mean, Strauss?" Philip juxtaposed.

"No, no, don't misunderstand! One of my great pals in the old Mincing Lane days, Rupert Kahn—poor devil, he's doing twelve months now, somebody told me—was engaged to a *Roumanische nekaveh* for a time, till he made off with the engagement rings and her silver combs, and you couldn't blame him either—calves like the hind legs of an elephant—Oh, appalling! . . . But I say, don't you think we'd better be moving on?" Strauss interrupted himself. They emerged from the doorway and Strauss slipped his arm through Philip's as though the dawn of their acquaintance was already ancient history.

"Where the hell am I wandering off to, Massel, old dear?" Strauss speculated. "I'm afraid I'm a trifle light-headed. It must be that champagne the Inland Company so beneficently provide, eh? Half a bottle of fizz always cuts more of a dash than a whole of Sauterne, although it's not strictly the thing for lunch, would you say? Still, it's worth the difference, every time! What's your preference?"

"I'm afraid I'm not much of a connoisseur myself! Palestine's wine's about as far as I've gone, with occasional whiskey and *lekkach*,"—Strauss looked puzzled—"you know, those curly little cakes! It's not been quite my line, somehow!"

"Poor old thing!" mused Strauss. "You've not moved very far and that's a fact! At about your age—I think my calculations are right—I'd spent three or four week-ends with Marjorie in Brighton . . . Oh, curse the man! Him and his dirty Doomington manners!" The youth scowled uglily. Somebody, evidently displeased by the expansive manner Strauss had adopted for his procession down Transfer Street, had thrust a

vicious elbow into the grey tweed waist. For one horrible moment it seemed that Strauss was mobilizing his resources for a punitive expectoration, but the West End reassumed control in time and Strauss continued :—

“ Oh, yes, Brighton, Marjorie, as I was saying ! That girl was a sponge, nothing more or less ! She'd just open her mouth and pour the stuff down like rainwater pouring down a spout. Gee, that's a while ago now ! Still, I don't think—damn those motors !—a show like Transfer Street is the place for one's confessions, what do you say ? One oughtn't to let oneself rip like this, but you've got the sort of face one can trust, Massel, if I may say so. Somehow I generally manage to land on my feet when I arrive in a strange town, though I take no credit to myself for it, mark you ! I remember once, first time I landed in Bordeaux . . . But for God's sake let's go somewhere and have some tea. Then we can discuss the boarding-house business and the way the wind blows in Doomington. How do you feel about it ? ”

They had arrived some time ago at the point where Transfer Street crosses the pride of the city, the thoroughfare called Labour Street. A stream of vehicles passing transversely had held them up, but when at last the policeman raised a hand in potent arrest, the two youths crossed and found themselves facing the Crystal Café.

“ This looks rather the kind of place ! ” exclaimed Strauss. “ What's it like ? ”

The inside of the gilded eating-houses that threw the glare of their lamps and the smells of their cooking into Labour Street had hitherto occupied Philip's attention for a curious moment at most. His ignorance seemed now to be a grave lacuna in his education.

“ Sorry, not the vaguest idea ! ” he protested ruefully.

“ Hold, I hear music ! Say, boy, I guess we'll try the

dandy li'l place right now ! ” declared Strauss, with an artful introduction of the appropriate accent. They entered, and the host ordered a delicate meal with some grandeur. Philip found the marble-faced walls a little ugly, but distinctly rich and impressive. The gentlemen in the orchestra he found also ugly, also distinctly rich and impressive ; particularly the florid gentleman at the piano, whose moustache wandered so persistently into his mouth that he gave up the attempt to blow it away and endeavoured to reconcile himself to the taste. He was so very inflated, would the sudden puncture of a pin dismiss him into thin air ? Anyhow the marble seemed solid enough. Philip surreptitiously passed his hand along the marble behind him to assure himself. His head was in a whirl. His friendship with the garrulous, glittering youth (Strauss made dainty play with his fingers to display two quite admirable rings, and there was a gleam of gold cuff-links from shirt-sleeves which he seemed deliberately to have pulled down an excessive inch), his friendship with Strauss had developed at so kinematic a speed that he was half afraid he could hear himself panting over the chocolate éclairs.

At least he had breath enough to tender such information as he possessed concerning Jewish boarding-houses, the people who might be considered the “ swells ” of the community, which synagogues would provide the happiest hunting-grounds for chase not strictly specified, and a number of kindred affairs. He discovered that he was usefuller than he had anticipated. He said to himself humorously that he was blossoming into a man of the world. Much fascinating conversation, or more strictly, monologue, followed, on matters less professional. It was laid down as axiomatic that every young fellow under eighteen, worth the least grain of his salt, knew

what's what—a phrase Philip had already encountered, but here, obviously, endowed with a more intimate meaning than hitherto. When Strauss requested him to choose between the Turkish and Russian compartments of his cigarette case, he felt it behoved him to patronize the Turkish, for a recondite technical reason which at once did high credit to his own imagination and satisfactorily impressed his friend. A number of entertaining adventures were narrated by Strauss, illustrative of the nature of what's what. There was Flo in the punt at Richmond. Oh, of course, a married woman, *she* was! But then her own husband had introduced her with a wink which meant merely, "Go ahead, Wilfrid, old duck, go ahead!" And there was silly old Bobby—insisted on wearing a wedding ring at Bournemouth, and Jimmy Gluckstein had spread the news that he'd settled down in decent matrimony. Did a chap no end of harm, that sort of thing! And, 'struth, yes, ha, ha, ha! that ducky little French bit, Flory! Her mother, moaning with toothache, had interrupted them at about two in the morning. There'd only just been time to slip under the bed. And it was March, too, March in Paris! From two till seven in the morning, mark you! Grr-grr! . . . From Strauss's enjoyment of the tale one could not help deducing that he felt, at least after this lapse of time, that his part in the episode was indisputably the most enjoyable, even the most dignified. . . . And oh, yes, talking about four-posters . . . there was Fanny . . . you should have heard . . . another cigarette? . . . and when her real boy came . . . camisole . . . about time we went . . . Oh no, no, don't mention it! . . ."

Yes, of course, Philip would be delighted to accompany Strauss to Mrs. Levinsky's, in Blenheim Road. But wait a moment, why not try Mrs. Lipson's, in Brownel Gap,

next door to Halick, the dentist? It was quite near to both the Reformed and the Portuguese Synagogues, a useful base for operations. . . . And it was at Mrs. Lipson's that Philip saw Strauss duly installed—after a dalliance in a bar parlour where Strauss drank a cocktail to fortify himself against the shock of his resumption into his tribe's bosom, and where Philip, school cap stuffed mournfully into trousers pocket, could not but accept a port and lemon for "old time's sake."

"You'll be certain, Philip, to call round for me tomorrow about twelve!" exhorted Strauss, as Philip at last left him that evening. "What's that, school? Oh, bother it, I forgot! Good old Philip, sitting at a nice desk doing multiplication sums and putting his hand up with the answer!"

"Look here!" Philip objected rawly. Yet it was difficult to shake off the temptation to believe that from more than one point of view, this, after all, was a fair epitome of scholastic labour. "School's all right! There's a good deal in it beyond books and things!" he reflected with some wistfulness. But the basement playground-restaurant compared rather dingily, he was uncomfortably conscious, with the blare and marble of the Crystal Café.

"Well, you're outgrowing it pretty quickly, I can say that for you! What do you say to coming round tomorrow evening? You could take me the round of the district . . . and what about a music hall to wind up with?"

"I can't let you do all this for me! It wouldn't be playing the game! I mean we've only met to-day and I don't know anything about the business side of things, and you see I don't get much money myself. I just give lessons to a master-tailor. . . ."

“Don’t be absurd, old boy ! I’ll expect you to do the same for me, with interest, when I’m down on my luck ! Not a word more ! Five o’clock, you think ? Good ! Well, so long, old dear ! Take a Turkish to smoke on the way home !”

“Er—thanks ! So long ! Till to-morrow !”

At the appointed time next day, at the very door of Mrs. Lipson’s boarding-house, Philip was seized with a sudden vehement impulse to turn his back upon his new friend, simmering enthusiastically somewhere beyond those *kosher* portals. Where after all was it leading to ? The most insensitive nostril could not fail to register the faint odour of corruption which hung about Wilfrid Strauss. Somehow that impeccable grey tweed suit was more shoddy than the corduroys of that poor old devil trundling a wheelbarrow beside the gutter. Yet whither did all the other roads lead ? Whatever the landscape on the journey, whatever pitiful doctrine guided you, where else but to a Wheatley cemetery, damp clay, a towsled dog barking emptily ? And how was Strauss less valiant a companion thither than Harry and Alec and the rest ? If he preferred to chase, not the shadow, but the glittering substance, who could blame him ? A fine specimen he himself had become ! Hardly a person in Doomington to talk to ; at home the unresponsive books—Swift and Lamb beginning to gesticulate as little intelligibly as his faded poets ; at school, still the unscaled barriers ! Nothing left but to moon about the streets, remembering, regretting—hoping never. What, indeed, was there to hope for ? The old loyalties were annulled, the old dreams crumbled ! Heigh-ho, thank God for Wilfrid Strauss and for noise, Life ! It was a chap’s duty to himself to know what Life meant before Life had done

with him, thrown him aside into that long, narrow dustbin. . . .

He knocked. The sound came sharp and clear like a challenge against the tedium which had been stupefying him for so weary a time.

Strauss was delighted, charmed. He had been troubled by spasmodic doubts as the afternoon wore on. Would Massel turn up after all? There was something in the lad he couldn't quite fathom, something which might turn Philip away from him in the mysterious manner so many people he had particularly wished to please had, from time to time, turned away. He hoped he'd turn up if only to save him the strenuous necessity of discovering somebody else likely to show him the ropes economically. Besides, there was something distinctly pleasing about the youth. If only he'd dress a little better. . . . Anyhow, he was going to be useful if merely as a guide—though one couldn't call him exactly a business man. He'd more than repay the price of a tea and a theatre now and again. And if he'd only allow himself to be initiated into the business, what confidence he would arouse in the most chary breast!

There was a value in Philip's friendship Strauss did not recognize so consciously. It gave him a peculiar satisfaction to observe the deference that Philip naively paid to his exhibition of his vanities; a satisfaction increased by the knowledge that Philip was a "college lad." It was amusing to gibe at "college lads," to be sure, and one didn't actually desire to be a "college lad," yet one could not help vulgarly and secretly envying them. . . . In any case, it's easy enough to get rid of a chap when he's outlived his use. Hadn't he already made that discovery often enough? Time enough for that. . . . "Come in, old man, come in! Risk a whiskey and soda?"

The tawdry gaieties Strauss had in his command followed in bewildering succession. Books seemed to become less and less important as the furtive weeks passed by. If a memory of his mother came palely before him, he would the more speedily betake himself to the company of Wilfrid Strauss. It was difficult to retain those old musics of Shelley when the brass bellowed windily across the Regent Roller-Skating Rink, and the girls cackled in your ear. No long time elapsed before Strauss had made the rounds of the less reputable cafés, the more shady music halls, and, finally, the Dooming-ton Zoological Gardens, with their alfresco dancing at the borders of the lake. The delights of the gardens were only vitiated for Philip by the inexorable custom which demanded that each male should at rigid intervals kiss his paramour—"strag" was the recognized term—in the ludicrously inadequate shelter of a laurel shrub.

There followed more than these. There followed Kate and her lazy eyes and the yelp of her animal laughter.

"Deeper, deeper, deeper!" became the insistent burden in Philip's brain. Closer round his feet the mud was gathering. Yet against this one thing he long managed to stand out, though Strauss would return to him, rubbing his eyes sleepily, or smacking his lips with luxurious appreciation. Delicately Strauss would suggest how illogical his position was, how, seeing it was necessary to take the plunge sooner or later, why not now, old sport?

Why not? More and more cynical his solitary mind was becoming, ever the more solitary as Strauss and he were more closely entangled in the cult of their pleasures. What else did women mean? They would die, he would die, securely enough all of them, whatsoever happened

in the interspace. Alec's old philosophy was gaining new confirmation. What inhibitions did Life hold by which a youth should not probe for the honey of experience, each flower, chaste or poisonous, that opened to the sun or moon?

"Feivele!" ventured Reb Monash to him one *shabbos* morning, "Tell me, what is this lord's son that takes thee about? I saw thee with him in Brownel Gap on Tuesday when I was going to Rabbi Shimmon. Thou didst not see me, no? Or maybe it suits thee not—when thou art with thy lord's son? The town talks! Tell me then, what wills he with thee? It likes me him not!"

"Oh, for God's sake, *tatte* . . . !"

For one moment the flame of the extinguished conflict seemed to glower and spit from Philip's eyes. Then he recovered himself. He stared into the pallor of his father's cheeks, avoiding the eyes, avoiding the deep lines of fatigue about the corners of his mouth. "Nothing, *tatte*, a friend! What will you?" Reb Monash was about to express his unease with another question when he too checked himself and the shadow of this new friendship lay between them, heavy, unexplained.

But when next Strauss seductively introduced the name of Kate into the conversation, Philip shouted suddenly, at the top of his voice—and in Cambridge Street, "Go to the devil, you're a swine!" He turned savagely on his heel and attempted for four evenings to attain emancipation in the Doomington Reference Library. He had not power enough, however, after the dull prostration of these months, to resist the suave note of apology and invitation which arrived for him on the fifth morning. A little public house near the

skating rink the same evening found them closer friends than before.

Channah was not so easily subdued as Reb Monash. She had heard ugly reports—the girls at the hat factory were very eloquent on the subject—concerning Mr. Strauss and his “goings on.” “Oh, Philip, Philip, there’s a dear! Won’t you now . . . come, Feivele! Oh, do give him up! I hate him, I hate him! Give him up for *my* sake!” . . . She returned frequently to the attack and knew devastatingly where his defences were weakest. “Not for *me*, give him up for mother’s sake!”

Philip temporized. He’d think about it. What was all the worry about; couldn’t he take care of himself? Channah, really, old girl, what on earth *was* there to sing about?

“But think! What would she have said? She’d have . . .”

“She’d have loved him! Just those little ways that any woman . . .”

“Any woman! That’s just what I said!”

“Oh, shut up, Channah, for Heaven’s sake, shut up!”

The collapse came suddenly. It was a shoddy enough affair. When Strauss left him with Kate in Kate’s house in Carnford Avenue in order to repair next door with her friend, Patsy of the broad bosom and the yellow hair, what was there for the youth to do, when Kate with half-closed eyes, through soft lips purred, “Coming, honey?” what was there but thickly to reply, “I’m following, Kate!” while the temples beat like hammers and the banisters seemed clammy with desire and shame.

Somewhat intently Dorah examined him when he returned to Longton next morning. She dropped into

the Yiddish suitable for the expression of deep feeling. "Nu, and where hast thou been all night? Not enough for thee to come in at twelve, at one, but thou must spend the night too! What was? Thy socialistic friends or thy wonderful Lord Backstreet? *Blegatchies*, knockabouts, thy whole brotherhood!"

Philip winced. "Astronomy!" he declared sickly. "We've been examining a new . . . a new comet!"

"It is no good for thee, thy Astronomy!" she declared categorically. "Thou art a tablecloth! An evening indoors with a book would do thee no harm. Or thou hast forgotten how to read, say?"

All that day he spent sitting in his own bedroom, a closed book before him, staring into the wall-paper beyond. Neither thoughts nor emotions stirred within him; only somewhere far down, there was a sensation as of a finger plucking at the strings of an instrument.

He had arranged to see Kate once more, about a week later. There was no conflict now. Heavily he saw the clock fingers creeping towards the hour of his appointment, and listlessly he closed the door behind him. A cool, clear evening was about them as Strauss and Philip repaired towards Carnford Avenue, with a wind in their faces which, in higher levels, was chasing clouds like yachts along the channels of the sky. As Kate's door closed behind them, the passing wind seemed to Philip a hand which had endeavoured to seize his coat, but, failing, moaned and subsided in the dark threshold of the house.

The sensation of something calling and something forsworn did not desert him. Now it was once more a wind attempting to circumvent the crooked chimney and sobbing away at length with a rattle in its throat. Now it was a finger of flame leaping from the fire in sudden appeal, or the sight of his own face in a looking-

glass, curiously impressing upon him the fact that he had not only brought one self to this place, but many selves, some of whom had once played a seemlier part in the comedy of his days than he who now produced a distracted image in Kate's looking-glass.

Conversation flowed in the room like beer from a public house tap, surfaced with froth and smelling stalely. He was talking with the others, but the lips seemed to be as much another's as his own, the lips of one over whom he had triumphed once and again, but who was triumphing now. Wilfrid Strauss seemed a mannikin manufactured from a pliant glass, though he showed his rings and crossed his legs as if his limbs were flesh and bone; transparent almost he seemed, so that the ugly design of the wall-paper was not intercepted by his contour; almost brittle, as if, were someone to handle him roughly, he would fall to the ground in fragments tinkling sharply. And when finally he withdrew with Patsy, the peculiar illusion remained with Philip that he had never in his life encountered a person whose farcical name was Wilfrid Strauss.

Yet when the woman whispered "Come!" the friend of Wilfrid Strauss did not disobey. The wind was still clawing at the window-pane as they entered her room. It was only when his eyes were closing in sleep that he saw moonlight invade the room and heard the wind wailing in the last horizon.

When he awoke the room was aflood with moonlight. It flowed over the bed making the sheets and counter-pane cloth of silver. The walls dropped from the ceiling in straight falls of frozen mist, the floor shone like a beaten metal. It seemed to him that a voice came upon the path of the moonrays, a voice not of sound but light, saying: Go! If it was the mother who had

seemed to be dead or perhaps—could it be?—that woman he had met once in the central gloom of Dooming-ton and whom he could so clearly envision now, he could not decide—that woman who had long ago taken him to her bed on the night when he had fled from his early terrors. Or perhaps it was none other than his own voice—for he was about to break free at last—insistently saying, Go, do not delay !

It was with no sense of shame that he rose from the bed and dressed quietly in that wizard room. In this world of cool clear beauty, at this time of vision, shame had no place. Had he departed from beauty, from vision ? He would return thither again.

Kate's hair lay over her face as she slept. He bent and smoothed her hair aside and moved away quietly.

He opened the front door of the house and walked along the deserted pavement of Carnford Avenue. Walking was not swift enough, it was too deliberate. He ran, his limbs loosely swinging over the dark streets. He ran effortlessly like a deer glimpsed through woods. He had no consciousness of direction and though he ran far he was not fatigued. No thought kept pace beside him beyond the knowledge of his running.

A policeman appeared suddenly from the gloom of a shop entrance. He brought down his hand menacingly on Philip's shoulder. Philip stopped dead.

"Just a tick, my fine young feller!" the policeman exclaimed. "Where are *you* coming from?"

"From Babylon!" Philip shouted. "Let me go! Get out of my way!"

"B—b—babel—*what*?" the policeman stammered. His upraised arm fell to his side. The lad was fifty yards away, once more running swiftly and evenly. Yet no !

He wasn't a burglar! It wasn't that! He wasn't carrying anything, and he certainly wasn't frightened! Drunk? Oh no, not drunk! Well then, what the 'ell? If it came to anybody being frightened . . . ! He lifted his helmet, passed his hand over his hair and withdrew again into the shop entrance.

Baxter's Hill! No sense of recognition or surprise arrested Philip when he found himself skirting the foot of the hill and, before long, running over the grassy path by the Mitchen River. Here he had found escape before to-night, here wall after wall that girdled the city of his slaveries had come crashing down! But as he left the bridge behind him and followed two or three broad curves of the river, out toward the cleaner spaces of water, he was conscious only that his strength was almost spent and his feet were dragging. Suddenly he collapsed. His legs gave way at the knees and his forehead fell into thick grass. The strange elation which had impelled him into the night, in a single moment deserted him. His body was racked with misery, his face twitched. With a last effort he turned his body round, stretched out his arms, and lay staring into passionless night. Stark misery held him clamped to the ground.

Vain and vain, he felt, his life had been, his life consummated now by this last treachery! Each of his little philosophies had but pandered to his conceit, to his sentimental stupidities, immured him the more closely in the stinking castle of Self. Sex had led him away and he had wallowed in its sty—he who had been granted, by his living mother and his dead, the surest path into open spaces and a wind from the sea. . . .

So for some time in this black despair he reproached himself with having at no time accepted the clean way,

as having been always odious, an insect in rotten wood. The mood passed. Another came, not armed with talons, but cold, profound, like a fog. How long this mood lasted there can be no telling. Yet it was at the very heart of this desolation that he became aware of a warmth and a benediction which had descended upon him. His face was being soothed with the contact of kindly flesh ! He heard the breathing of an animal. At last he knew that a horse was moving its soft mouth up and down his face, assuring him that now he might throw aside his sorrow, enter once more into the company of innocent things. A few yards away he perceived another horse grazing, a misty sweetness against the background of night. The beauty of the arched line of its neck seemed almost to arrest his heart. The horse over him, as having achieved its intent, brought its head away. He could hear the champing of its jaws, the tearing of grass.

The lad looked steadily towards the waned stars and the clear moon. Much lay behind him, he knew. More lay in front of him. Beyond the bridge along the road, deep in his city, lay a little thing and a great, the first republic, School, whose citizenship he must yet earn. He had moved there hitherto with averted eyes, a stranger. Thence great affairs and greater expanded circle-wise, beyond race, beyond country, beyond even the gigantic world, out beyond the moon, the sun ; even—he laughed aloud—even into the hazard of the very stars.

He rose from the grass and walked over to the water's edge. The air was warm with the new summer. The two horses moved about near him, like friends. He was young, young ! Come, it would be morning soon ! Was a sleepy bird already singing a first song ?

He slipped off his clothes swiftly and dived into the

water. When he rose again, the water-drops flung from his hair gleamed like gems. It was cold, harshly, superbly cold ; but he shouted for joy as he struck for the bank in the first breath of the morning. The horses rubbed their noses together and communed.

GLOSSARY

(The following Yiddish words—mainly, of course, of Hebrew or German extraction—are spelt in such a fashion as rather to recall their actual pronunciation than to indicate what is often a dubious or mixed origin.)

Becher. Beaker.

Blintsie. A thin cake, usually of mashed potatoes, and fried in oil.

Bobbie. Grandmother.

Chayder. A Hebrew school.

Chazan. A professional cantor at services.

Davenning. The reciting of prayers, which must not be interrupted by extraneous matter.

Folg mir. Obey me.

Gollus. The dispersion ; the exile.

Goyishke. Gentile (adj.).

Ligner. Liar.

Machzer. Festival prayer-book.

Maggid. Professional orator.

Minchah. Afternoon service.

Minyon. The quorum of ten worshippers for prayer.

Mishkosheh. Be content ; that will do.

Mitzvah. Lit. a command ; hence, a pious act.

Nekaveh. A female.

Perinny. An exaggerated eiderdown.

Shabbos. The Sabbath Day, Saturday, on which, among many prohibitions, it is forbidden to ride.

Shiksah. A Gentile girl.

Shmaltz. Fat, usually of fowls.

Shmeis. To give a whipping.

Shool. Synagogue.

Takke. Indeed.

Tallus and Tephilim. Praying-shawl and phylacteries.

Yamelke. Skull-cap.

Yeshiveh. A highly advanced *chayder*.

Yom tov. Lit. a good day ; hence, festival.

Zadie. Grandfather.

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